Al-Mīzān

An Exegesis of the Qur'an

ʿAllāmah al-Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī

Translated by: ʿAllāmah Sayyid Saʿīd Akhtār Rizvī

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In the Name of Allah,
the Beneficent, the Merciful.

All praise is due to Allah, the Lord of the Worlds;
the Beneficent, the Merciful;
the Master of the Day of Judgment;
Thee only we serve, and to Thee alone we beseech
for help;
Guide us in the straight path;
The path of those upon whom Thou hast bestowed
favors,not of those against whom Thou art
wrathful, nor of those who are astray.

O' Allah! send Your blessings to the head of
Your messengers and the last of
Your prophets,
Muḥammad and his pure and cleansed progeny.
Also send Your blessings to all Your
prophets and envoys.

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Arabic Transliteration Key

Arabic Letters	Transliteration	Arabic Letters	Transliteration
ا	ā	ع	ʿ
ب	b	غ	gh
ت	t	ف	f
ث	th	ق	q
ج	j	ك	k
ح	ḥ	ل	l
خ	kh	م	m
د	d	ن	n
ذ	dh	ه	h
ر	r	و	w/ū
ز	z	ى	y/ī
س	s	ء	ʾ
ش	sh	ة	-
ص	ṣ	ـَ	a
ض	ḍ	ـَ	i
ط	ṭ	ـُ	u
ظ	ẓ		

Publisher's Note

In an effort to make the text more accessible to English-speaking readers, the editors have chosen to use English names for the prophets and figures (as listed below but not limited to) and to use Anglicized terms that now appear in English dictionaries.

Ādam	Adam	Mūsá	Moses
Dawūd	David	Sulaymān	Solomon
Hārūn	Aaron	Shuʿayb	Jethro
Ibraḥīm	Abraham	Yaʿqūb	Jacob
ʿĪsā	Jesus	ʾAyyūb	Job
Isḥāq	Isaac	Yūshaʿ	Joshua
Ismāʿīl	Ishmael	Yūsuf	Joseph
Jibrāʾīl	Gabriel	Zakariyyā	Zachariah
Maryam	Mary	ʿUzayr	Ezra

Arabic terms and names have been transliterated according to the *International Journal of Middle East Studies* (*IJMES*).

For ease of reading, glyphs and traditional honorifics such as "peace be upon him" or (s.a.w.) which are commonly used as a gesture of respect after the name of the Prophet Muḥammad, the Imāms, or other sacred figures have been omitted from this text. No disrespect is intended, and may God's peace and blessings be upon them all!

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Foreword

This second edition of the tenth volume of *Tafsīr al-Mīzān* comprises of the *tafsīr* (exegesis) of fifty one verses (4 to 54) of Sūrah al-Mā'idah (The Table) which is a continuation from Eng. volume nine.

The significant discussion in this volume concerns with the problem of the right approach to the Qur'an and to the history of Islamic thought. In this context the meaning of perception and thinking is discussed from various angles. In this discussion the author says:

> "God has given man thinking power over the senses, so that he may use it as a means to reach the perfection appointed for him; he is helped by his intellectual cognition covering the creation, in other words, the theoretical knowledge."

Then follow the following discussions: the Qur'anic account of the sons of Adam and its comparison with the Biblical version of the story; the Qur'anic conception of Shariah (Islamic law) and the difference between *shariah*, *dīn* and *millah*, the afflictions of the heart; and an account of the incidents that will occur during the age of the Twelfth Imam, according to the Qur'anic verses and traditions.

Tawheed Institute Australia Ltd are thankful to those who took the painstaking task of editing the first Eng. volume (previously published by WOFIS) and to bring this new edition to completion. We hope the readers will welcome this edition with much interest. We also humbly request the readers to forgive our shortcomings in rendering this edition.

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About the Translator

The late ʿAllāmah Sayyid Saʿīd Akhtār Rizvī was one of the most sincere preachers of Islam and an active scholar, both when he was in Tanzania in the Bilāl Muslim Mission (an Islamic organization active in Tanzania), and also when he returned to his own country of India. In the way of spreading Islam he has rendered enormous services and had been most active.

ʿAllāmah Sayyid Saʿīd Akhtār Rizvī had written scores of books and booklets in English, Urdu and Swahili, many of which have been published; and some other titles which have been published by WOFIS. Some of his books have been translated and published by in French, Italian, Japanese, Thai, Indonesian, Hausa and other languages.

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About the Author

The late Islamic scholar, thinker, and philosopher, ʿAllāmah al-Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī came from the celebrated Ṭabāṭabāʾī family of Tabriz. For the last three centuries, this family has produced generation after generation of renowned religious scholars in Azerbaijan (Iran). They are descendants of the second Imām, al-Ḥasan b. ʿAlī (peace be on both of them). The clan is also referred to with the title, al-Qāḍī.

ʿAllāmah al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī was the son of al-Sayyid Muḥammad b. al-Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī. ʿAllāmah was born in Tabriz on 29 Dhū al-Ḥijjah 1321/17 March 1904. His father died in 1330 (1912). The orphaned child grew up in Tabriz, and after completing his religious education there, around 1341 (1923), he went to Najaf (Iraq), the most important center of Shia religious learning.

In Najaf, he began his higher studies with such illustrious scholars as Shaykh Muḥammad Ḥusayn Nāʾīnī al-Gharawī (1277–1355/1860 or 1861–1936), the son of Shaykh al-Islām ʿAbd al-Raḥīm, and Shaykh Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Gharawī al-Iṣfahānī (1296–1361/1878–1942), the son of al-Ḥājj Muḥammad Ḥasan, Muʿīn al-Tujjār.

These two were among the most prominent scholars in the Shia world. They were among the most prominent scholars not only in the fields of Shia jurisprudence and principles of jurisprudence, but in all Islamic subjects. Their opinions and theories are still followed today. Each founded his own school of thought and trained thousands of Shia scholars and jurists; and all the *marājiʿ al-taqlīd*[1] of the Shia world, to this day, are their students. Shaykh Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Gharawī al-Iṣfahānī was a philosopher, unsurpassed in his time; a man of literature; and a poet in Arabic and Persian; he was a genius whose achievements made others look up to him as their ideal. Shaykh Nāʾīnī, with his bold opinions and decrees in the political and social life of the Muslim *umma*, has carved for himself a niche in history.

ʿAllāmah al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī was much influenced by these two teachers,

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1 The highest authorities of Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*) whose rulings are followed by others. (Pub.)

particularly by al-Iṣfahānī, in the development of his thought and knowledge. A third influence was that of al-Sayyid Abū al-Qāsim Jaʿfar Khwānsārī (1313– 80/1895 or 1896–1961), the son of al-Sayyid Muḥammad al-Moseswī, known as "the mathematician." ʿAllāmah al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī was proud to have studied mathematics with him, and also wrote a book on higher mathematics, in which he applied some special theories of his teacher.

ʿAllāmah studied philosophy and metaphysics from al-Sayyid Ḥusayn al-Ḥusaynī Bādkūbahʾī; the latter was a student of al-Sayyid Riḍā, who studied with al-Sayyid Moses, a well-known teacher of philosophy and related subjects. In the fields of ethics and spirituality, ʿAllāmah received his training from his relatives, al-Sayyid ʿAlī al-Qāḍī (1285–1366/1869–1947), a well-known scholar who established a school of spiritual and ethical training which still flourishes today.

All these influences combined to create in ʿAllāmah al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī a well-balanced academic and spiritual personality. He was a well-respected authority on religious subjects of jurisprudence and its fundamentals; a philosopher of independent views and new theories; and an inspired model of ethical and spiritual perfection. He not only taught morality, but also lived it. Yet it is also correct to state that his scholarship was overshadowed by his fame and prestige as a philosopher and a spiritual man.

ʿAllāmah al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī returned to Tabriz in 1353/1934, where he was welcomed as a religious scholar. There he spent his time teaching higher philosophy to willing disciples—but it was a small place for his talents. In 1364/1945 he migrated to Qum, the most important center of religious education in Iran. In Qum, he remained engaged in imparting the knowledge of ethics, philosophy, and the exegesis of the Qurʾan to those students who had already attained a high level of erudition. There he remained until his death on Sunday, 18 Muḥarram 1402/15 November 1981. May God bestow His mercy on him. Amen.

Many religious leaders of the present generation were and are among his students and disciples, the most famous being the late Murtaḍā Muṭahharī (1338–99/1920–79).

ʿAllāmah al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī's fame rests on his academic works—the most important being his great exegesis of the Qurʾan, *al-Mīzān fī tafsīr al-Qurʾān.* It is said to be the foundation stone of the academic prestige which ʿAllāmah al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī was accorded in the Muslim world.

Among his other works is *Uṣūl-i falsafah va ravish-i riʾalism* [Practical and Philosophical Principles of Realism]. This book is a comparative

study of Islamic philosophy and various modern anti-Islamic schools of thoughts, especially Marxism. His disciple, the late Murtaḍā Muṭahharī, annotated this work, thus making it easily accessible to the average man.

A third book, *Shiʿa dār Islām*, was first published in Persian; later it was published in English with the title, *Shiʾite Islam.* The ʿAllāmah wrote this book on the request of Professor Kenneth Morgan of Colgate University, to introduce Shiism to the West.

However, it is his *tafsīr, al-Mīzān* (published in 20 volumes in Arabic) which presents the true picture of the author's academic style and his way of thinking. In the preface to volume 1, the author outlines his plan, to explain the Qurʾan with the help of the Qurʾan itself. This he faithfully does, all the way through to the end of the *tafsīr*.

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Chapter 5

Sūrah al-Māʾidah

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Verses 4–5

بِسْمِ ٱللَّهِ ٱلرَّحْمَٰنِ ٱلرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allah, the most Merciful, the most Compassionate

يَسْأَلُونَكَ مَاذَا أُحِلَّ لَهُمْ ۖ قُلْ أُحِلَّ لَكُمُ الطَّيِّبَاتُ ۙ وَمَا عَلَّمْتُمْ مِنَ الْجَوَارِحِ مُكَلِّبِينَ تُعَلِّمُونَهُنَّ مِمَّا عَلَّمَكُمُ اللَّهُ ۖ فَكُلُوا مِمَّا أَمْسَكْنَ عَلَيْكُمْ وَاذْكُرُوا اسْمَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ ۖ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ سَرِيعُ الْحِسَابِ ﴿٤﴾

(5:4) ***They ask you as to what is made lawful for them. Say: "The good things are made lawful for you and what you have taught the beasts of prey, training them to hunt—you teach them of what Allah has taught you—so eat of that which they hold for you and mention the name of Allah over it; and fear Allah; surely Allah is swift in reckoning"***

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It is a general question which has been answered with a general reply; and it lays down an overall principle for differentiating between lawful and unlawful; that a thing using of which is considered good is a good thing. The word, "good," is also used without any condition or restriction and it means that the judge for identification of its goodness should be the normal intellect; whatever normal intellect considers good is good, and every good is lawful. We have explained lawfulness and goodness in general terms putting reliance on normal intellect, because according to the fundamentals of jurisprudence that is how generality is explained.

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It is said that this sentence is in conjunction with "good things" that is, and also lawful for you is what you have taught the beasts of prey that is, the prey of those beasts which you have taught. This explanation supposes that a word, "prey of," is omitted here but understood. But apparently, the sentence is in conjunction independently with the preceding sentence, and

the word, "what," is a preposition of condition and the clause: "so eat of that which they hold for you," gives the result of that condition; so there is no need to suppose omission of any word in the sentence.

al-Jawārih is a plural of *al-jārihah* which denotes such a bird or beast, which is used for hunting or preying, like hawk, falcon, dog and cheetah. *Mukallibīn* is the active participle of the verb *al-Taklīb* (to teach and train dogs for preying; to keep hunting dogs and releasing them for this purpose). The sentence is restricted with the word *mukallibīn* and this may be a sort of indication that the order is reserved for hunting dog and does not cover other preying beasts.

The words: "of that which they hold for you." The restriction, "for you," clearly shows that the lawfulness is limited to that case where the dog preys for its owner, not for itself. The words: "and mention the name of God over it," complete the conditions of lawfulness: the prey should be taken by the beasts of prey according to the given training and the beast should hold it for the hunter and the name of God should be mentioned over it.

The sentences, in short, indicate that the beasts trained for hunting, that is, the hunting dogs, when they are properly trained and they catch for you any wild animal (eating of which is lawful when it is slaughtered according to the shariah) and you have mentioned the name of God at the time of releasing the dog, then you may eat from it if the dog kills it before you reach there (that earlier recitation of Divine name will be counted as the proper slaughter). If the dog doesn't kill it, then you will have to slaughter it properly reciting the name of God; but that doesn't come under this rule.

Then the verse ends on the words: *and fear Allah; surely Allah is swift in reckoning*. It clearly shows that one should fear God while hunting wild animals. Hunting should not result in excessive loss of life, nor should it be done merely for game, arrogance, or amusement because God is swift in reckoning and He requites transgression and oppression in this world before the hereafter. Such oppressions and transgressions where people indulge in indiscriminate killings of poor animals inevitably lead one to a very shameful end as we have often seen.

الْيَوْمَ أُحِلَّ لَكُمُ الطَّيِّبَاتُ ۖ وَطَعَامُ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ حِلٌّ لَكُمْ
وَطَعَامُكُمْ حِلٌّ لَهُمْ ۖ وَالْمُحْصَنَاتُ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنَاتِ وَالْمُحْصَنَاتُ مِنَ
الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ إِذَا آتَيْتُمُوهُنَّ أُجُورَهُنَّ مُحْصِنِينَ غَيْرَ

مُسَافِحِينَ وَلَا مُتَّخِذِي أَخْدَانٍ ۗ وَمَنْ يَكْفُرْ بِالْإِيمَانِ فَقَدْ حَبِطَ عَمَلُهُ وَهُوَ فِي الْآخِرَةِ مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ ۝٥

(5:5) ***This day have been made lawful for you (all) good things; and the food of those who have been given the Book is lawful for you and your food is lawful for them; and the chaste (ones) from among the believing women and the chaste (ones) from among those who have been given the Book before you (are lawful for you), when you have given them their dowries, taking (them) in marriage, not fornicating nor taking them for paramours in secret; and whoever denies faith, his work indeed is forfeited, and in the hereafter he shall be one of the losers.***

Repetition of lawfulness of good things (although it was mentioned in the immediately preceding verse) and beginning of the verse with the adverb, "This day," aims at showing the favor of God on the believers by making lawful for them the food of the People of the Book and their chaste women.

Probably, the clause: "have been made lawful for you (all) good things," has been added to the clause: "and the food of those who have been given the Book is lawful for you ..." to create reassurance in the hearts of the believers by adding a definite order with an order in which there might be room for some doubt; this addition would remove perplexity and uneasiness. For example, a master says to his servant, 'You are the owner of all that I have gifted to you earlier in addition to this and this extra item.' Mentioning previously gifted things will give the servant full confidence concerning the ownership of the later additions. In a way, the same may be the explanation of the following two verses: *For those who do good is good (reward) and more (than this)*; ... (10:26). *Therein they shall have whatever they will; and with Us there is yet more* (50:35).

It looks as though the believers' hearts were very perturbed and they felt doubts concerning the lawfulness of the food of the People of the Book, especially in view of the very strict admonition regarding their friendship—they were strictly forbidden to mix with them and have friendly relations with them. In this background, the order concerning their food was joined with the order of lawfulness of good things without any reservation. Now, they could be sure that the Jews' and the Christians'

food is like other lawful good things, and their hearts will be at ease. The same is the explanation of the verse: *and the chaste (ones) from among the believing women and the chaste (one) from among those who have been given the Book before you (are lawful for you)*.

The Divine words: "and the food of those who have been given the Book is lawful for you and your food is lawful for them," have not laid down two separate rules. Obviously, it is one speech with a single connotation. The words: "and your food is lawful for them," have not ordained any order for the People of the Book. Even if we say that disbelievers are obliged to follow the orders of Islamic shariah, yet they do not believe in God and His Messenger or his Prophethood. They do not listen to the Prophet nor do they accept his commandments; and it is not the style of Qur'an to address some people or give any order to them when it is clearly known that such a talk will have no effect on them, and that address will avail nothing. [Of course, if such a talk becomes necessary for some reasons, God turns the address from those people to the Prophet or uses some other modes of speech like that. For example, God says: *Say, "O People of the Book! Come to a word between us and you"* (3:64). *Say: "Glory be to my Lord; am I aught but a human messenger?"* (17:93); there are other many such verses.]

In short, the clauses are not meant legislating two separate laws: one, allowing the food of the People of the Book to the Muslims, and the other, making the food of the Muslims lawful for the People of the Book. Rather, the whole speech gives one order and that is the lawfulness of food for both groups. There is no restriction in between on either side. It is like the Divine words: *... then if you find them to be believing women, do not send them back to the unbelievers; neither are these (women) lawful for them, nor are those (men) lawful for them ...* (60:10). In other words, there is no lawfulness on any side.

al-Taʾām according to philology refers to all that is eaten and taken as nourishment. But it is said that it is used to wheat and other such grains only. *Lisān al-ʾArab* says: "When the people of Hijāz use the word *al-Taʾām* without any restriction or association, they mean wheat exclusively." He further says: "al-Khalīl has said, 'In high Arab language *al-Taʾām* is wheat in particular." The same meaning has been given by Ibn al-Athīr in *al-Nihāyah*. It is for this reason that in most of *ahādīth* narrated from the Imams of *Ahl al-Bayt* it has been declared that *al-Taʾām* in this verse means wheat and other grains, although a few traditions give another

meaning; and we shall talk about it under "Traditions."

In any case, this permission does not cover those animals whose meat is forbidden and slaughtering them can make no difference like pig, nor does it cover those lawful animals, which have not been slaughtered properly like the one over which the name of God has not been recited and which has not been slaughtered according to Islamic rules. God has counted the above-mentioned unlawful items in the verses of prohibition (that is, the four verses in the chapters of "The Cow," "The Table, "Cattle" and "The Bee") describing them as uncleanness, transgression, and sin, as we have explained earlier. Far be it from God to allow what He has called uncleanness, transgression, and sin and then to mention it as a favor to the believers.

Moreover, these forbidden things have been enumerated in this very chapter a few lines before this verse. And nobody can claim abrogation in such cases and especially in the chapter of "The Table" about which the traditions say that it is an abrogating chapter, not abrogated.

... and the chaste (ones) from among the believing women and the chaste (ones) from among those who have been given the Book before you (are lawful for you): The description of the group using the verb (that is, among those who have been given the Book), instead of saying, from the Jews and the Christians or even saying, from the People of the Book, points in a way to the reason of the law; because God wants to show His favor and to ease the burden from the believers. The meaning: We have done you a favor by easing the burden by removing the prohibition of marriage between your men and the chaste women of those who have been given the Book before you, because they are nearest to you of all the non-Muslim communities, as they were given the Book and they had believed in One God and the prophets, in contrast to the Idol-worshippers and polytheists who disbelieve in the prophets. Probably, it is for this reason that "those who have been given the Book" is followed by the words "before you"; it clearly indicates a mixing and intermingling.

Be as it may. The verse describes the favor of God and relaxation of rule; such a law cannot be made subject to abrogation. There are two verses which seem to contradict this relaxed law: *And do not marry the idolatresses until they believe* (2:221); *and hold not to the ties of marriage of unbelieving women* (60:10). But these two verses cannot abrogate the verse under discussion because the first verse is in the chapter of "The Cow" and it was the first detailed chapter which came down in Medina

long before the chapter of "The Table" [Ch. 5]; and the second one is in the chapter of "The Woman Examined" [Ch. 60] and it was revealed in Medina before the conquest of Mecca, that is, more than two years before the revelation of the chapter of "The Table." Therefore, the earlier revealed verses cannot abrogate a verse revealed later. Moreover, the traditions say that the chapter of "The Table" was the last chapter revealed to the Prophet; it has abrogated some previous laws but nothing has abrogated this chapter. Apart from that, you have seen in the exegesis of the verse 2:221 that these two verses (of "The Cow" and "The Woman Examined") are not concerned at all with the subject of the marriage with a Christian or a Jewish woman.[1]

If one were to claim that the verse of "The Woman Examined" somehow showed unlawfulness of such a marriage, and if one were to say that the tone of the verse of "The Table," showing Divine favor and relaxation proved that such a marriage was previously forbidden—otherwise there was no place for showing favor and relaxation—then this verse of the chapter of "The Table" will abrogate the verse of the "The Woman Tested, and not vice versa. We shall further talk under "Traditions" about this second verse.

al-Muhsanāt has been translated here as "the chaste ones." Chastity is one of the meanings of *al-ihsān*. The clause, "and the chaste (ones) from among the believing women and the chaste (ones) from among those who have been given the Book before you," clearly shows that these women are unmarried, and putting together these two groups of the People of the Book and the believers demands that the word *al-muhsanāt* should have the same meaning in both places. It means that *al-ihsān* here cannot be interpreted as Islam, because of inclusion of the women of the People of the Book. Also, the word cannot be interpreted as the free women because the Divine favor would remain incomplete if it were confined to the free women and excluded the slave girls. Thus, we see that no connotation of the word, *al-ihsān*, can fit on this verse except chastity.

The verse explicitly shows the lawfulness of the chaste women of the People of the Book for the believers without mentioning permanent marriage or the *mutʾah*; the only condition is that the believers should give them their dowries and the relationship should be of marriage, not fornicating nor taking them for paramours in secret. It means that the

1 *al-Mīzān* (Eng.), vol. 3. (Trans.)

believers are allowed to marry them paying them their dowries and not indulging in illicit relations with them, without mentioning any condition regarding permanency or temporariness of the marriage; and we have described under the Divine words, *Then as to such of them with whom you have* mutʾah that *mutʾah,* is a marriagelike the permanent one.[1] Its details should be seen in the books of *fiqh.*

... when you have given them their dowries, taking (them) in marriage, not fornicating nor taking them for paramours in secret: It is the same theme that we had seen in the verse. "*And lawful for you is (all) besides that, that you seek (them) with your property, taking (them) with decency, not committing fornication*" (4:24). This sentence indicates that the verse is speaking about lawfulness of the marriage with chaste women of the People of the Book and does not cover slave girls.

... and whoever denies faith, his work indeed is forfeited and in the hereafter he shall be one of the losers: *al-Kufr* actually means to hide, to cover. For covering to take place there must be an object that is covered. A *hijāb* (veil) cannot be a *hijāb* unless there is something to be veiled. *al-Kufr* may be of Divine favors, of Divine signs or of God and His Messenger and the Last Day.

al-Kufr (denial, covering) of *Imān* demands that there should be in the beginning a firm *imān* (belief, faith). It is an attribute, which is firmly, rooted in the believer's heart, that is, the correct and true beliefs, which give rise to the good deeds. In this light, denial of faith means not acting on what one knows to be right and truth. For example, if one neglects the pillars of religion like prayer, *zakāt*, fast and hajj although he knows that they are the pillars of religion, or keeps friendship with the polytheists, mingling with them and taking part in their activities, although knowing that only Islam is the truth.

This is the significance of the denial of the faith. However, there is a fine point here *al-kufr* denotes hiding and the human mind do not accept that an established thing has been covered and hidden unless it is perpetually kept out of sight. Therefore, a man will be accused of denial of the faith only if he continues to neglect the demands of his faith and does not act according to his knowledge and belief. If he goes against the demands of his faith only once or twice without persisting in that behavior, then the word *al-kufr* will not be used for him. He will be said to have

1 *al-Mīzān* (Eng.), vol. 8. (Trans.)

committed *fisq* (sin).

It appears from the above that "whoever denies faith" actually means whoever persists in denying faith, although the sentence uses the verb instead of adjective. In other words, whoever does not adhere to what he knows to be truth and does not hold fast to the pillars of religion, he is the disbeliever in the faith and all his good deeds are forfeited as God Says: "his work indeed is forfeited."

This verse fully corresponds with the following verses of the chapter of "The Battlements": *... and if they see the way of rectitude they do not take it for a way, and if they see the way of error, they take it for a way; this is because they rejected Our signs and were heedless of them. And (as to) those who reject Our signs and the meeting of the hereafter, their deeds are forfeited. Shall they be rewarded except for what they have done?* (7:146–7). In this verse, God mentions them as taking the way of error and leaving the way of rectitude after seeing the both, that is, even after knowing them, then further attributes to them rejection of the signs, and the signs are called signs when it is known what they indicate; finally, it is explained as rejection of the hereafter because if he does not reject the hereafter the knowledge that it was certainly to come should have prevented him from deviating from the truth; as a result, their deeds are forfeited.

Similar is the theme of the Divine words: *Say: "Shall We inform you of the greatest losers in (their) deeds? (These are) they whose labour is lost in this world's life and they think that they were acquiring good by their deeds. These are they who disbelieve in the signs of their Lord and His meeting, so their deeds become forfeited, and therefore We will not set up balance for them on the Day of Resurrection ..."* (18:103–5). It can easily be seen how these verses fit the theme of denial of faith as described above.

If we ponder on the above explanations, we will see how the sentence: "and whoever denies faith, his work indeed is forfeited," becomes connected with the preceding sentences. It in fact completes the preceding statements. The idea is to warn the believers of the danger that would face them if they became lax in sincerely following the commands of God. They should not freely mingle with disbelievers. God has allowed them the food and the chaste women of the People of the Book to bring some ease in the believers' lives in order that it should become a means of spreading piety; hopefully it would cause the pure Islamic morality to seep into the non-Muslim society. It would create beneficial knowledge and propagate good deeds.

This is the main purpose of this legislation. It was not meant for the

Muslims to tumble down the pitfalls of debauchery and descend into the valleys of lechery and lewdness. They should not be beguiled in their desires nor should they be infatuated with their beauty, lest they gain the upper hand and their culture and their people's culture dominate the Muslim society; then their misconduct will vanquish the Islamic righteousness. This, in its turn, will bring a greater calamity and the believers will become victims of degradation and retrogression. Consequently, this Divine favor will become a devastating tribulation and this relaxation turn into a curse instead of a blessing. That is why God warned the believers—after describing lawfulness of their food and chaste women—that they should not rush headlong into taking advantage of this relaxed rule in such a way that it leads them to the denial of faith and neglect of the pillars of religion; otherwise, it would cause nullification of all their good deeds and in the hereafter all their deeds will be forfeited.

The exegetes while explaining these two verses have plunged into unknown waters and come up with astonishing explanations which are neither supported by the Qur'anic wordings, nor are in keeping with the context.

For example, one has said that the clause: *The good things are made lawful for you,* refers to *bahīrah, sāibah, wasīlah* and *hāmī*.[1] Another has said that the words: *the food of those who have been given the Book is lawful for you,* denote that in basic principle the food of the People of the Book is lawful for the believers, God has never forbidden it; and that the animals' meat too is lawful even if it had been slaughtered according to their own custom. A third one said that the verse shows that you may eat with them on one table. Someone wrote that the clause: *and the chaste (ones) from among those who have been given the book before you,* shows that these chaste women were lawful to the believers from the beginning, they were never forbidden before because the clause: *and lawful for you is (all) besides that* (4:24), was enough to make them lawful. Another one said that the sentence: "and whoever denies faith, his work indeed is forfeited,"

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1 *Bahīrah* was a she-camel exempted from slaughter or carrying of any burdens after she had brought forth five or ten issues. *Sāibah* was a beast left to pasture without attention or restriction; she was neither ridden on nor milked. *Wasīlah* was a goat under some superstition. *Hāmī* was a stallion-camel, left free, not made use of in any way.
Slaughtering them or eating their meat was a taboo in pre-Islamic days, and Islamic abolished their superstitious rituals of the Idol-worshippers. See for detail 5:103. (Trans.)

sounds a warning to the believers that they should not reject the order allowing them the food of the People of the Book and their chaste women.

They have written these and other similar meanings some of which are sheer foolhardiness and others are arbitrary; still others are totally against the context and do not look at the adverb "This day" nor at the favor and relaxation. What we have described earlier in the Commentary is enough to show the invalidity of such interpretations. The claim that the clause: *and lawful for you is (all) besides that* (4:24), shows the lawfulness of marriage with women of the People of the Book, is clearly invalid because the verses 4:23–24 aim at describing the lawfulness and unlawfulness of women because of consanguinity and marriage. They are not concerned with difference of religion.

Examining Narrations

(1) al-Suyūtī writes under the verse: *They ask you as to what is made lawful for them ...* Ibn Jarīr has narrated from ʿIkrimah: "Verily the Prophet, sent Abū Rāfiʾ to kill the dogs. He killed them until he reached al-ʾAwālī. Then ʿĀsim b. ʿAdiyy, Saʾd b. Khaythamah and ʿUwaym b. Sāʾidah came (to the Prophet) and said, 'What has been made lawful for us, O Messenger of God?' So, this verse was revealed: *They ask you as to what is made lawful for them ...* (*al-Durr al-manthūr*)

(2) Again he says, "Ibn Jarīr has narrated from Muḥammad b. Kaʾb al-Qarazī, 'When the Prophet, ordered killing of the dogs, they said: "O Messenger of God! What has been made lawful for us from this group?" Then the verse was revealed: *They ask you as to what is made lawful for them ...*'" (*ibid.*)

Author's comments: The two traditions explain each other. The theme is that they had asked what categories of dogs they were allowed to keep and use in various activities like hunting, etc.

But the Divine words: *They ask you as to what is made lawful for them. Say: "The good things are made lawful for you, ...*" do not tally with this theme because the question was restricted and the verse is general.

Moreover, these two traditions as well as the next one apparently show that, the clause: *and what you have taught the beasts of prey*, is in conjunction with: *the good things,* and that it means: It has been made lawful to you what you have taught. That is why some exegetes have said that the word: *prey of,* is omitted, but understood in this sentence. But we

have already explained that: *what you have taught the beasts of prey,* is a conditional clause, which is completed by the clause: *so eat of that which they hold for you.*

According to these traditions, the group about which the question was asked refers to dogs.

(3) Also, he says, "al-Fāriyābī, Ibn Jarīr, Ibn al-Mundhir, Ibn Abī Hātim, al-Tabarānī and al-Hākim (who has said that the tradition is correct) and al-Bayhaqī have narrated from Abū Rāfiʾ that he said, 'Gabriel came to the Prophet, and asked permission to enter. The Prophet gave him permission but he tarried (in entering). The Prophet took his cloak, came out, and said, "We have already given you permission." (Gabriel) said, "Yes, but we do not enter a house wherein there is a dog or a picture." They looked around and lo! There was a puppy in one of their houses.'

"Abū Rāfiʾ said, 'Then he (the Prophet) ordered me to kill every dog in Medina, and this I did. People came and said, "O Messenger of God! What is allowed to us from this group, which you have ordered to be killed?" The Prophet was silent. Then God revealed: *They ask you as to what is made lawful for them. Say: "The good things are made lawful for you and what you have taught the beasts of prey, training them to hunt ..."* Then the Messenger of God said, "When a man releases his dog and recites the name of God and it holds the prey for him then he should eat what the dog has not eaten."'" (*ibid.*)

Author's comments: What the tradition describes about the coming down of Gabriel is very strange. Moreover, it does not stand on sound footing because it shows that Gabriel did not come to the Prophet because there was a puppy in one of their houses. But the story does not tally with the apparent meaning of the verse where both the question and its reply are unrestricted. More probably, the tradition is a forged one.

(4) Also he says, "'Abd b. Hamīd and Ibn Jarīr have narrated from ʿĀmir that the said, 'Verily ʿAdiyy b. Hātim al-Tāʾī came to the Messenger of God, and asked him about the prey of dogs; the Prophet did not know what to say until God revealed to him this verse in the chapter of "The Table": *you teach them of what Allah has taught you.*'" (*ibid.*)

Author's comments: There are other traditions of the similar meaning and the objections mentioned earlier apply to all of them. Apparently,

these and similar traditions are an attempt to fit some events on the verse; but the attempt is inconclusive and defective. What is clear is that they had talked to the Prophet about hunting with dogs and then asked him about a comprehensive principle to distinguish the lawful from the unlawful. So, God mentioned their question in the verse and replied to them by giving a comprehensive principle in this respect. Then the reply was given to their specific question about dogs. This meaning is clear from the verse [and it does not need any such tradition to make its meaning clear.]

(5) al-Kulaynī has narrated through his chains from Hammād from al-Halabī from Abū ʿAbdillāh that he said, "It is written in the book of ʿAlī, about the Divine word: *what you have taught the beasts of prey,* that it refers to dogs." (*al-Kāfī*)

Author's comments: al-ʿAyyāshī has narrated it in his *al-Tafsīr* from Samāʿah b. Mihrān from the same Imam.

(6) Also, he has narrated through his chains from Ibn Muskān from al-Halabī that he said, "Abū ʿAbdillāh, said, 'My father used to give *fatwā* and he practised *taqiyyah* and we were afraid of (giving actual ruling) about the prey of eagles and falcons; but now we are not afraid. Its prey is not lawful except when you get the chance to slaughter it. Because it is written in the book of ʿAlī that God has revealed this sentence: *what you have taught the beasts of prey training them to hunt,* about the dogs.[1]'" (*ibid.*)

(7) Also, he narrates through his chains from Abū Bakr al-Hadramī from Abū ʿAbdillāh. He says, "I asked the Imam about the prey of eagles, falcons, cheetahs and dogs. The Imam said, 'Do not eat except what you slaughter except the prey of dogs.' I said, 'If it (dog) kills it.' The Imam said, 'Eat it because God says: *what you have taught the beasts of prey, training them to hunt—you teach them of what Allah has taught you—so eat of that which they hold for you.*' Then he said, 'Every beast of prey holds the prey for itself except the trained dog, for it holds it for its owner.' He further said, 'And when you release the dog mention the name of God over it, that is its *dhabīhah.*'" (*ibid.*)

(8) al-ʿAyyāshī narrates from Abū ʿUbaydah from Abū ʿAbdillāh about a man who releases a trained dog and mentions the name of God at the time of release. The Imam said, "He shall eat from

1 The word, *mukallibīn*, used in the verse, is derived from *kalb* (dog); and this derivation restricts the permission to the game hunted by dog. (Trans.)

what the dog has held for him even if he has killed it. And if there was found an untrained dog with it, then don't eat from it." "I asked, 'And (what about) falcons and eagles?' The Imam said, 'If you get chance to slaughter it then eat from it; otherwise don't eat it.' I said, 'So, cheetah is not like dog?' He said, 'No. Nothing is called *mukallab* except the dog (*kalb*).'" (*al-Tafsīr,* al-ʿAyyāshī).

(9) Abū Basīr narrates from Abū ʿAbdillāh about the Divine words: *what you have taught the beasts of prey, training them to hunt—you teach them of what Allah has taught you—so eat of that which they hold for you and mention the name of Allah over it,* that he said, "There is no harm in eating what the dog has held when he has not eaten from it; but if the dog has eaten from it before you reach there, then do not eat it." (*ibid.*)

Author's comments: The various particular orders mentioned in the traditions like restriction of lawfulness to the prey of dog because of the Divine word: *mukallibin* and: *which they hold for you,* and the condition that no untrained dog should join in the hunt, all this is inferred from the verse and we have mentioned them before.

(10) Harīz narrates from Abū ʿAbdillāh that he was asked about a dog of a Magian[1] which a Muslim trains and mentions the name of God on releasing it. The Imam said, "Yes, it is a trained dog. There is no harm when God's name is mentioned over it." (*ibid.*)

Author's comments: The *hadīth* is based on the generality of the word: *what you have taught to the beasts of prey.* al-Suyūtī narrates in *al-Durr al-manthūr* from Ibn Abī Hātim from Ibn ʿAbbās that he was asked about a Muslim who takes a trained dog of a Magian or his falcon or eagle which has been trained by its owner and the Muslim releases it and it catches a prey. Ibn ʿAbbās said, "Don't eat it even if you have invoked the name of God because that animal or bird was taught by the Magian while God says: *what you have taught the beasts of prey, training them to hunt—you teach them of what Allah has taught you*." But the weakness of the *hadīth* is obvious because although the speech: *you teach them of what Allah has taught you*, is addressed to the believers but what God has taught the Muslims regarding the training of dogs is not different from what He has taught to the people of other religions[2] and this connotation helps the

1 Magus, adherent of Mazdaism. (Ed.)

2 This Divine teaching refers to the creative instinct ingrained in human nature. (Trans.)

reader understand that it does not restrict the dogs' training to the believers. There is no difference when a dog is trained, whether a Muslim or a non-Muslim trained it, or whether a Muslim or a non-Muslim owned it.

(11) al-ʿAyyāshī narrates from Hishām b. Sālim from Abū ʿAbdillāh that he said explaining the Divine words: *and the food of those who have been given the Book is lawful for you*. It refers to lentils, grains, and similar things of the People of the Book. (*al-Tafsīr*, al-ʿAyyāshī).

Author's comments: al-Shaykh has narrated it in *al-Tahdhīb* from the same Imam and the wording there is, "lentils, chickpeas, etc."

There are traditions from ʿAmmār b. Marwān and Samāʿah from Abū ʿAbdillāh explaining what is lawful from the food of the People of the Book. The Imam said, "Grains." (*al-Kāfī; al-Tahdhīb*)

(12) al-Kulaynī narrates through his chain from Ibn Muskān from Qutaybah al-Aʿshā that he said, "A man asked Abū ʿAbdillāh, and I was present there. He said to the Imam, 'A Jew or a Christian releases (a dog) on goats or sheep and it attacks it, then it is slaughtered. Should his *dhabīhah* (slaughtered animal) be eaten?' Abū ʿAbdillāh said, 'Do not enter its price in your property and don't eat it because it is the (Divine) name (which is important) and no one can be trusted in this matter except a Muslim.' That man said to the Imam, 'God has said: *This day have been made lawful for you (all) good things and the food of those who have been given the Book is lawful for you.*' Abū ʿAbdillāh said, 'My father used to say that it refers to grains, and similar things.'" (*al-Kāfī*)

Authors Comment: This tradition has been narrated by al-Shaykh in *al-Tahdhīb* and by al-ʿAyyāshī in his *al-Tafsīr* from Qutaybah al-Aʿshā from the Imam. As you see, the traditions explain the lawful food of the People of the Book as being confined to grains, and similar items. It is the meaning that is understood from the word: *al-Taʿām* (food) when it is used without any contextual restriction as it appears from the traditions and the stories narrated from the early days of Islam. That is why a great majority of our *ʿulamāʿ* (scholars, learned) believes that the lawfulness is confined to the grains, and similar things and the food prepared from them.

Some people (Rashīd Ridā in *Tafsīr al-manār*) have forcefully rejected this interpretation, saying that it is against the usage of the Qur'an concerning the word: *al-Taʿām*. He further says, "In the Qur'anic language, cereal grain is not the overwhelming meaning of *al-Taʿām*. God has said

in this very chapter: *Lawful for you is the game of the sea and its food, a provision for you and for the travellers* (5:96); and nobody can claim that the food of the sea means wheat and grain. Also, God says: *All food was lawful to the Children of Israel—except that which Israel had forbidden to himself* (3:93), and no one has said that the word food here means wheat or grain, because nothing of it was forbidden to the Children of Israel—neither before the revelation of the Torah nor after it. *al-Taʾām* basically refers to all that is tasted or eaten. God says narrating the story of the stream that Tālūt had said: *whoever then drinks from it he is not of me, and whoever does not taste of it* (lam Yaṭʾamhu), *he is surely of me* (2:249). Also, God says: *when you have taken the food* (taʾimtum), *then disperse* (33:53)."

Comment: Would that I could know what did he understand from the sentence: *al-Taʾām* when used without any contextual restriction refers to the grain, and similar things. It is amusing that he has tried to refute it with the verbs *yaṭʾamhu* and *taʾimtum* while the scholars had talked about the noun *al-Taʾām* and not about the verbs derived from that root. Another of his argument is based on the genitive construction "food of the sea" and this construction itself is a clear context, which shows that it doesn't refer to cereal grain because wheat or barley does not grow in the sea. Another argument is based on the sentence: *All food was lawful to the Children of Israel,* and he himself says that wheat or cereal grains were not forbidden in their religion. This context clearly shows that the talk is not about cereal grains. He should have found out from the Qur'an the examples where the word: *al-Taʾām* is used in its generality without contrary context and then he should have spoken; like the Divine words: *redemption by feeding a poor man* (2:184); *the expiation (of it) is the feeding of the poor* (5:95); *And they give food out of love for Him* (76:8); *Then let man look to his food* (80:24). [In all these verses the noun *al-Taʾām* has been used free from contextual restrictions and it all refers to the food prepared from cereal grains.]

He further says, "There was no confusion regarding cereal grains whether they were lawful or not. The question arose only about meat when something happens to create doubt about its lawfulness, e.g. if the animal dies a natural death or if it is slaughtered as an offering to the idols or without invoking the name of God. That is why God has said: *Say: 'I do not find in that which has been revealed to me anything forbidden for an eater to eat of except that it be what has died of itself or blood poured forth ...'* (6:145); and all this is related to animals. It clearly shows that unlawfulness is restricted to this group only and unlawfulness of other things

requires similar clear declaration."

Comment: This talk is more amusing than the previous one. He says that cereal grains are not the subject of doubt that it is lawful or not; the doubt occurs about the meat only. We should ask him: Which time is he talking about? Is he looking at these times of ours when people are familiar with Islam and its general regulations since so many centuries or is he talking about the times when the Qur'an was being revealed and the religion was just a few years old? Does he not know that the people had asked the Prophet about the subjects, which were clearer than the rules of cereal grains? God has quoted some of their questions. For example: *They ask you as to what they should spend* (2:215). ʿAbd b. Hamīd has narrated from Qatādah that he said, "We have been told that some people had said: 'How can we marry their women and they are on a (different) religion and we are on a (different) religion.' Then God sent down the verse: *And whoever denies faith, his work is indeed forfeited ...*" You will find similar questions and objections in the traditions as we have quoted some in the subject of *hajj al-tamattuʾ*, etc.

When they could raise such objections after the verse was revealed allowing the marriage with chaste women of the People of the Book, then what was there to prevent them, before the verse was revealed, from asking about eating together with the People of the Book or to eat the cereal grains purchased from them or the meals prepared from it like bread or other dishes; or other items prepared from cereal grains when these things were made by the People of the Book, because: they have their own religion and we follow a different religion! Especially so when God had warned the believer in so many verses against establishing friendship and close relation with the People of the Book and inclining towards them.

Rather, we can turn the table against him when he says, 'There is a chance of confusion about meat whether it was lawful or not.' But how could they ask about it when God had described the general unlawful items of meat in the chapter of "Cattle": *Say: "I do not find in that which has been revealed to me anything forbidden for an eater to eat of except that it be what has died of itself, or blood poured forth, or flesh of swine—for that surely is unclean—or that which is a transgression other than (the name of) Allah having been invoked on it"* (8:145); and then in the chapter of "The Bee." Both these chapters are of Meccan period. Then details have been given in the chapter of "The Cow" which was revealed in Medina long before the chapter of "The Table." And even in this chapter, before

this verse, forbidden meat has been described. And this preceding verse according to Rashīd Ridā explicitly shows that the animals slaughtered by the People of the Book are not forbidden. Now, we may ask: How could they entertain any doubt about the lawfulness of the animals slaughtered by the People of the Book when verse after verse of Meccan as well as Medinite period was revealed declaring that it was lawful; and the Muslims were memorizing these verses and reciting them and teaching them and putting them into practice?

He has claimed that the verse of the chapter of "Cattle" confines the unlawful things to what has been mentioned therein; accordingly, unlawfulness of animals slaughtered by the People of the Book will require a clear proof. Well, there is no doubt that every rule needs a proof to support it and his claim clearly shows that this exclusive confinement will be valid only when there is no other proof to show that some other things too are forbidden.

Now, if he wants proof from traditions then those who say that the animals slaughtered by the People of the Book are unlawful rely on the traditions, which are narrated in explanation of this verse, and we have quoted some of them earlier.

And if he wants proof from the Qur'an, then, first of all it is an unjustifiable arrogance, because tradition is the companion of the Qur'an and they are not separate from each other in being authoritative sources of the law. Secondly, we shall ask him what are his views about the animals slaughtered by unbelievers other than the People of the Book like Idol-worshippers and atheists. Will he say it is unlawful because it is a dead body, which has not been slaughtered according to the shariah? In that case, let us look at two slaughtered animals: On one of them the name of God was not invoked at all and it was not slaughtered facing the *qiblah*; and the other was not slaughtered in the Islamic way. What is the difference between the two? God is not pleased with either, both are unclean in the eyes of the religion, and God has forbidden the unclean things. God Says: *(Who) enjoins them good and forbids them unclean things* (7:157); and He has said in the preceding verse: *They ask you as to what is made lawful for them. Say: "The good things are made lawful for you."* This question and answer is a clear proof that lawfulness is confined to the good things and even in this verse, the words: *This day have been made lawful for you (all) good things*, point to this exclusiveness especially when they describe the favor of God on the believers.

If he says that the animals slaughtered by those unbelievers are

unlawful because they invoke on it the names of other than God, like their deities, then there is no difference whether a name of other than

God is invoked on it or the name of God is invoked but in a way which has been abrogated and with which God is not pleased.

Rashīd Ridā further says, "God has very forcefully forbidden the Muslims to follow the idolators of Arab in eating dead animals of all different categories mentioned earlier and sacrificing animals on their idols. It was done in order that the early Muslims should not treat it as an easy matter according to their earlier habit. As for the People of the Book, they were far from eating dead bodies or sacrificing for idols."

He has forgotten that the Christians among the People of the Book eat pork and God has mentioned and forcefully condemned it. In fact, they eat all things the Idol-worshippers eat because atonement of Jesus Christ has made all things lawful for them. In any case, this is an absurd reasoning that should not be used in exegesis of the Book of God or in understanding the laws of His religion.

Finally, he says, "It was the policy of Islam to deal very strictly with polytheists of Arabia in order that everyone in the Arabian Peninsula should feel compelled to enter into the fold of Islam; but it was very lenient to the People of the Book. Then he quotes the rulings of a few companions who believed that the animals sacrificed in synagogues or churches were lawful to eat.

The basic idea lurking behind this speech is, as appears from some traditions, that God had chosen the Arabs over other nations and the Arabs were superior to others. That is why they used to call non-Arabs as *al-mawālī* (plural of *al-mawlā;* clients) but the Qur'anic verses apparently do not agree with it. God has said: *O you people! Surely We have created you of a male and a female and made you nations and tribes that you may recognize each other. Surely the most honorable of you with Allah is the one among you who is most pious* ... (49:13); a lot of traditions giving this connotation have been narrated from the Imams of *Ahl al-Bayt*.

Islam while calling people to the right path had not put the Arabs on one side and the non-Arabs on the other. It had put the polytheists—be they Arab or non-Arab—on one side, and they were given no choice except that they should accept Islam; and it had put the People of the Book, Arabs and non-Arabs alike, on the other side and if they did not enter in Islam, they were given an option to come under the protection of Islam by paying *jizyah*. All that can be seen in this treatment is some leniency shown to them; but it doesn't mean that their slaughtered animals should

become lawful to the Muslims when they have killed it according to their own custom and ritual. As for the practice of *fatwā* of some companions, it has no authority at all in Islam.

It is clear from the above discussion that this verse does not show that the animals slaughtered by the People of the Book are lawful when killed in an un-Islamic way; nor is there any other proof to prove it. If anyone insists on lawfulness of the animals slaughtered by them (because of the generality of the verse), then we have to restrict it to the case when it is known that the animal was slaughtered according to the rules of Islamic shariah, as may be inferred from the words of al-Ṣādiq quoted above from *al-Kāfī* and *al-Tahdhīb*: "It is the (Divine) name which is important) and no one can be trusted in this matter except a Muslim." Further details may be seen in the books of *fiqh.*

(13) al-ʿAyyāshī narrates from al-Ṣādiq about the Divine words: *and the chaste (ones) from among those who have been given the Book before you (are lawful to you), that he said*, "It (*al-muhsanāt*) means the chaste ones." (*al-Tafsīr,* al-ʿAyyāshī).

(14) The same book narrates from the same Imam about the words: *and the chaste (one) from among the believing women*, that he said, "It means the Muslim women."

(15) al-Qummī narrates from the Prophet that he said, "Verily the marriage is allowed with only those People of the Book who pay *jizyah;* marriage with others is not lawful." (*al-Tafsīr,* al-Qummī).

Author's comments: It is because without payment of *jizyah* they will be counted among *kāfir harbi.*

(16) al-Bāqir said, "Verily it is lawful to marry only the simple-hearted women from among them." (*al-Kāfī; al-Tahdhīb*)

(17) al-Ṣādiq was asked about a believing man who marries a Christian or a Jewess. The Imam said, "When he can get a Muslim woman then what will he do with the Jewess or Christian woman?" It was said to him, "He is inclined towards her." He said, "If he does, then he should stop her from drinking liquor and eating flesh of swine, and know that there must be a deficiency in his religion." (*Man lā yahduruh al-faqīh*).

(18) al-Ṣādiq said, "There is no harm if a man does *mutʾah* with a Jewess or a Christian woman while he has got a free (Muslim) woman." (*al-Tahdhīb*).

(19) al-Bāqir was asked about a Muslim man, "Can he marry a

Magian?" He said, "No; but if he has got a Magian slave girl, then there is no harm if he establishes sexual relations with her; he should practice coitus interruptus and should not seek a child from her." (*Man lā yahduruh al-faqīh*)

(20) al-Kulaynī narrates through his chain from ʿAbdullāh b. Sinān from Abū ʿAbdillāh that he said *inter alia* in a *hadīth*, "And I don't like a Muslim man to marry a Jewess or a Christian woman lest his child becomes a Jew or a Christian." (*al-Kāfī*).

(21) Also, he narrates through his chains from Zurārah, and al-ʿAyyāshī from Masʾadah b. Sadaqah, that he said, "I asked Abū Jaʾfar, about the words of God: *and the chaste (ones) from among those who have been given the Book before you.*" The Imam said, "It is abrogated by the words: *and hold not to the ties of marriage of unbelieving women*" (60.10). (*al-Kāfī*).

Authors Comment: It is a problematic *hadīth,* because the chapter 60 was revealed long before the chapter of "The Table" and abrogating verse cannot come before the abrogated one. Moreover, it is accepted and confirmed in the traditions that the chapter of "The Table" is the abrogator and not the abrogated as we have mentioned repeatedly. Another proof to show that it is not abrogated may be seen in the foregoing tradition that *mutʾah* with a woman from the People of the Book is allowed and people have acted upon it; and it was described in the verse of *mutʾah* that *mutʾah* is a *nikāh* and marriage.

Another tradition says the verse is abrogated by: *And do not marry the idolatress until they believe* (2:221); and we have already mentioned the objections on this tradition. Details can be seen in the books of *fiqh.*

(22) al-ʿAyyāshī narrates from Abān b. ʿAbd al-Rahmān about the words of God: *and whoever denies faith his work indeed is forfeited*, that he said, "I heard Abū ʿAbdillāh, saying, 'The least that throws a man out of Islam is that he has an opinion against the truth and (even after realizing his error) he holds fast to it.' The Imam then recited the verse: *and whoever denies faith, his work indeed is forfeited*. Then he said, 'He who denies faith does not accomplish what God has ordered and is not pleased with it.'" (*al-Tafsīr,* al-ʿAyyāshī)

(23) Muḥammad b. Muslim narrates from one of the two (fifth or sixth) Imam that he said, "It is not implementing (the commandments of God) until he discards the whole lot." (*ibid.*)

Author's comments: What we have described earlier is enough to explain the fine points of these traditions.

(24) ʿUbayd b. Zurārah said, "I asked Abū ʿAbdillāh, about the words of God: *and whoever denies faith, his work indeed is forfeited.* He said, 'It is not implementing what he had acknowledged (to do); an example of it is that one neglects the prayer without sickness and without involvement in some work.'" (*ibid.*)

Author's comments: God has named prayer as faith in the verse: *and Allah was not going to make your faith to be fruitless* (2:143). Probably, that was the reason that the Imam particularly mentioned it as the example in this tradition.

(25) The Imam said, "This (denial of faith) refers to him who believes and yet obeys polytheists." (*al-Tafsīr,* al-Qummī)

(26) Abū Hamzah (al-Thumālī) says, "I asked Abū Jaʾfar, about the words of God: *and whoever denies faith, his work indeed is forfeited, and in the hereafter he shall be one of the losers.* He said, 'Its esoteric Qurʾanic interpretation is: and whoever denies the *wilāyah* of ʿAlī; and ʿAlī is the faith.'" (*Basāir al-darajāt*)

Author's comments: It is esoteric or inner meaning, opposite of the manifest one, as we have explained while writing about " The Decisive and The Ambiguous Verses" in the third volume of this book[1]. Also, the tradition may be based on the 'Flow of the Qurʾan'; and the Messenger of God had named ʿAlī as Faith when he had gone out to fight ʿAmr b. ʿAbd Wadd in the Battle of the Trench, when he said: "The whole of faith has gone out to fight the whole disbelief."

There are other traditions of the same theme.

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1 *al-Mīzān* (Eng.), vol. 5. (Trans.)

Verses 6–7

The first verse contains rules of all three types of *al-Tahārah* (cleanness): *wudū*ʾ, *wājib ghusl* and *tayammum*; and the second verse emphasizes or complements this order. There is another verse already mentioned in the chapter of "Women" which deals with these three modes of cleanness: *O you who believe! Do not go near prayer when you are intoxicated until you know (well) what you say, nor when you are in a state of major ritual impurity, unless (you are) travelling on the road—until you have washed yourselves; and if you are sick or on a journey or one of you comes from the privy or you have touched the women, and you cannot find water, betake yourselves to clean earth, then wipe a part of your faces and (a part of) your hands. Surely Allah is Pardoning, Forgiving* (4:43).

This verse of the chapter of "The Table" is clearer than that of the chapter of "Women" and covers more aspects of the rule. That is why we had not given a detailed commentary there, until we have reached the verse under discussion here.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِذَا قُمْتُمْ إِلَى الصَّلَاةِ فَاغْسِلُوا وُجُوهَكُمْ وَأَيْدِيَكُمْ
إِلَى الْمَرَافِقِ وَامْسَحُوا بِرُءُوسِكُمْ وَأَرْجُلَكُمْ إِلَى الْكَعْبَيْنِ ۚ وَإِنْ كُنْتُمْ
جُنُبًا فَاطَّهَّرُوا ۚ وَإِنْ كُنْتُمْ مَرْضَىٰ أَوْ عَلَىٰ سَفَرٍ أَوْ جَاءَ أَحَدٌ مِنْكُمْ مِنَ
الْغَائِطِ أَوْ لَامَسْتُمُ النِّسَاءَ فَلَمْ تَجِدُوا مَاءً فَتَيَمَّمُوا صَعِيدًا طَيِّبًا
فَامْسَحُوا بِوُجُوهِكُمْ وَأَيْدِيكُمْ مِنْهُ ۚ مَا يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ لِيَجْعَلَ عَلَيْكُمْ
مِنْ حَرَجٍ وَلَٰكِنْ يُرِيدُ لِيُطَهِّرَكُمْ وَلِيُتِمَّ نِعْمَتَهُ عَلَيْكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ
تَشْكُرُونَ ۝٦

(5:6) ***O you who believe! When you rise up to prayer, wash your faces and your hands as far as the elbows, and wipe a part of your heads and your feet to the ankles; and if you are under obligation to perform a total ablution, then wash (yourselves); and if you are sick or on a journey, or one among you comes from privy, or you have touched the women, and you do not find water, betake***

yourselves to clean earth and wipe a part of your faces and (part of) your hands therewith; Allah does not desire to put on you any difficulty, but He wishes to purify you so that He may complete His favor on you, that you may be grateful.

al-Qiyām (to stand up, to rise up), when followed by preposition *ilā* (to) generally connotes the intention of doing that thing; because when one intends to do a thing one usually moves towards it. Let us suppose a man is sitting and he intends to perform an act, usually he would rise to do it. In other words, rising up for a work is inseparable from its intention. There is a similar example in the words of God: *And when you are among them and establish the prayer for them* (4:102), that is, you intend to establish the prayer. Conversely, there is a verse which uses the word wish or intention to allude to the actual deed: *And if you wish to have (one) wife in place of another and you have given one of them a heap of gold, then take not from it anything* (4:20); it means when you divorce a wife and marry another; so the verse uses the word "wish" for the actual deed.

In short, the verse shows that prayer must be preceded by bath and *wudū*ʾ. If it had been unrestricted it would have meant necessity of *wudū*ʾ before every prayer irrespective of the words: *and if you are under obligation to preform a total ablution, then wash (yourselves)*. However, legislative verses are seldom unrestricted in all aspects. Moreover, it is possible to say that the coming words: *but He wishes to purify you,* explain this obligatoriness of bath, as will be explained later. It is only this much explanation that can be given here for this verse; the exegetes have written at length about it but it is all related to the matter of *fiqh* and not to *tafsīr.*

... wash your faces and your hands as far as the elbows: *al-Ghusl* (pouring water on something); it is usually done for cleaning, removal of dirt and filth. *al-Wajh* (the side of a thing that faces you); but mostly it is used for the front side of man's head, that is, the side which has eyes, nose and mouth in it; when somebody faces you his features become manifest to you; the traditions narrated from the Imams of *Ahl al-Bayt* interpret it as the area from the beginning of the hairline in the forehead up to the tip of the chin length wise and that which is covered by the thumb and middle finger breadthwise. There are some other delineation mentioned by the exegetes and jurisprudents.

al-Aydī (plural of *al-yad*); it is the organ which is used for folding and unfolding, catching and releasing, attacking someone, etc. It begins from

shoulder ending at fingertips. Because most of these activities like catching and releasing are done through that part which begins from elbow down wards, that section is also called hand; and for this very reason the section from wrist to fingertips is also called hand. In this way, the word becomes common between the whole and its' parts.

It is this commonality which makes it necessary to mention some association to point to the intended meaning; and it is for this reason that God has added: "as far as the elbows" to show that the area of the hand to be washed is that which ends at the elbows; also it shows that the whole area up to the finger tips is covered. The traditions also support this meaning. The preposition *ilā* (to, as far as) indicates the limit of action and it connotes continuation of movement. This preposition does not show whether or not the elbows are included in the order of washing; the order to wash the elbows is derived from the traditions, not from this preposition.

Someone has said that the preposition *ilā* in this verse means "together with" as is seen in the verse: *and do not devour their property (as an addition) to your own property* (4:2). He has also argued on the strength of traditions that the Prophet used to wash the elbows in *wudū*ʾ. It is really an astonishing insolence in exegesis of the Divine Book. Let us say that the tradition describes an action, but an action may be interpreted in different ways. How can it be used to pinpoint the meaning of a word? Or it may legislate a rule without intending to explain this verse. Moreover, the obligatoriness of washing the elbows could have been inferred from logical reasonings; or may be the Prophet has added to it, because he had the authority to do so (as he had done in the five prayers, as the correct traditions say). As for the verse: *and do not devour their property (as an addition) to your own property*, the word: *al-akl* (to devour) contains the idea of addition and joining and for this reason it is followed by the preposition: *ilā;* it is not that *ilā* gives the meaning of togetherness.

The above discussion makes it clear that the clause: "as far as the elbows," qualifies the words, "your hands." It does not clarify where the washing of hands is to begin and where it is to end. So far as this clause is concerned, the washing could begin from the elbows going to the fingertips (and that is the way man acts while washing his hand apart from *wudū*ʾ) or it could begin from fingertips ending at the elbows. But the traditions from the Imams of *Ahl al-Bayt* guide us to follow the former method, instead of the latter.

This removes the objection raised by many people that the clause: "as

far as the elbows" proves the obligatoriness of beginning the washing from fingertips ending at the elbows. This claim is based on the assumption that the clause: "as far as the elbows," is related to the order of washing; but, as we have explained, it is connected with the hands. It should be realized that the word "hands," being a common noun, needed an association to make its meaning clear, and once the word "elbows" connects with "hands" it cannot be again connectedwith the order of washing.

Moreover, the *ummah* unanimously agrees that the *wudū*ʾ of those who begin washing from the elbows coming to the fingertips is correct (vide *Majma*ʾ *al-bayān*). And this unanimity emanates from the fact that the verse gives this meaning and it could only be correct if the clause: "as far as the elbows," is connected with the "hands" and not with the washing.

... and wipe a part of your heads and your feet to the ankles*: *al-Mash (to let the hand or any other limb pass over something). They say: 'I wipe the thing'; 'I wiped part of the thing' (*bi-shay*ʾ). When this verb is used without preposition it indicates wiping of the whole thing; and when used with the preposition *bi,* it denotes partial wiping. The Divine words: "and wipe a part of your heads," show that only a part of the head is to be wiped; however it doesn't show which parts are to be wiped. It is known only from the traditions. Our correct traditions say that it is the front part of the head.

The words, *wa arjulakum* has been recited in two ways:

With *kasrah* (*-la-*) of (*wa arjuli*̲*kum*)*:* In this case it is clearly in conjunction with *bi-ruʾūsikum* that is, "and wipe a part of your heads and your feet." Some people say that this *kasrah* here has no grammatical significance; it just follows the inflection of the preceding word, *bi-ruʾūsikum.* But it is a mistake because following in inflection is considered a bad grammar as grammarians have said; and the Divine words should not be taken in such a vulgar way.

With *fathah* of (*-la-*) (*wa arjulakum*). If you read the sentence without any preconceived idea you will see that *arjulakum* is in conjunction with the grammatical position of *bi-ruʾūsi*̲*kum* [which is in dative case and should have been *ruʾūsakum* but for the preposition *bi*]. You will understand that the verse shows the obligatoriness of washing the face and hands and wiping the head and feet. You will never think that the word: "and your feet" should be connected to the clause: "wash your faces" in the beginning of the verse, while another order to wipe the parts of the heads has already come in between. A man of good literary taste will not

try such gymnastics in a speech of high literary value. How can a speaker of high standards agree to say for example: 'I kissed the face of Zayd and his head and touched his shoulder and hands', when he actually want to say that he had kissed the hands also?

Numerous traditions for wiping the feet have been narrated from the Imams of *Ahl al-Bayt*. As for the traditions of *Ahl al-Sunnah,* they do not purport to explain the wordings of the Qur'an; they rather describe the action of the Prophet and *fatwā* of some companions. However they differ among themselves: Some show the obligatoriness of wiping the feet, while the others support their washing.

However, overwhelming majority of the Sunnīs has given preference to the traditions of washing over those of wiping; but one should not entangle with them here because it is a matter of jurisprudence, and the arguments and counter-arguments are more appropriate for a book of *fiqh.* However, they have tried to fit the verse on a ruling of *fiqh* which they have accepted and have written various contrived reasons for it; but the verse does not agree with such interpretations unless one is prepared to pull it down from the peak of eloquence to the depth of incoherence.

Some people have said that *arjulakum* (with *fathah* of *-la-*) is in conjunction with: "wash your faces"; and if it is recited *arjulikum* (with *kasrah* of *-li-*), then it just follows *bi-ruʾūs̱ikum.* But we have already explained that such interpretations are not worthy of a speech of high literary standard.

[The author has then quoted some more abstruse grammatical interpretations of the partisans of washing. We have omitted them because they were beyond the grasp of non-Arabic speaking readers. (Trans.)]

Someone even while reciting with *kasrah* of "*-li-*" has tried to show obligatoriness of washing of feet. He says that the conjunction is in its place [that is, "your feet" is in conjunction with "wipe a part of your heads";] yet wiping is a shortened form of washing and therefore wiping of feet means their washing! Then he supports his argument by saying that the verse mentions the limits of the washed organ only that is, the hands and does not limit the wiped organ that is, the head; now when it limits the wiped organ by saying: "and your feet to the ankles," we know that it wants them to be washed!

This is the worst type of argument. Wiping is totally different from washing and there is no inseparable connection between them. Apart from that, why should only the feet be washed and the head be left for wiping? Would that I knew what prevents him from interpreting the word mash

wherever it appears in the Qur'an or traditions as washing and vice versa. Why should not the traditions of washing taken as to mean wiping and the traditions of wiping as meaning washing? In this way all the proofs will turn topsy-turvy without any clear end. As for his supporting reason he turn was tried in it to impose a meaning on the word through analogy and it is the worst type of analogy.

[Again the author quotes here some reasoning to show that wiping and washing are not two separate actions; and then replies to it. We have omitted it because of its abstruseness. (Trans.)]

This and similar contrived reasonings which this verse has been made to suffer go against its manifest meaning; their only aim is to justify traditions of washing in a way that they should not appear to be going against the Qur'an. If we open the door for imposing the theme of a tradition on a verse by twisting the apparent meaning of that verse then nobody could be found guilty of going against the Qur'an. There is a better way for the believers in the washing of the feet to follow. They should say as some early *muhaddithīn* (like Anas and al-Shaʾbī) are reported as saying that Gabriel had brought wiping and the *sunnah* is washing. It means abrogation of the Book by the *Sunnah* and the subject will turn from the *tafsīr* to the Principles of Jurisprudence: whether or not the *Sunnah* can abrogate the Book. When an exegete says that a certain tradition is against the Book, he means to say that the connotation of this tradition goes against the apparent meaning of the Book. He shows the conflict of the tradition with the Qur'an, not that he gives a *fatwā* for a rule of the shariah.

Now, we come to the words: "to the ankles": *al-Kaʾb* is the bone protruding on the dorsum of the foot. Some people say that it is the bone protruding at the joint of the leg and foot. In this meaning there are two such bones at the joint of each foot and leg.

***... and if you are under obligation to perform a total ablution, then wash (yourselves)*:** *al-Junub* is an infinitive verb but is generally used in the meaning of active participle; that is why it is used for both genders as well as for singular, dual and plural. When they want to use a word as an infinitive verb, they say *al-janābah*.

This sentence is in conjunction with the clause: wash your faces, as the verse is meant to show the necessary stipulation of cleanliness for prayer. The sentence means: perform a total ablution if you are in *al-janābah*. This condition alludes to an unspoken condition in *wudūʾ*. The verse then will mean: *wash your faces and your hands as far as the elbows, and wipe*

a part of your heads and your feet to the ankles, if you are not *junub*; *and if you are junub, then perform a total ablution.* It may be inferred from it that *wudū*ʾ is prescribed if there is no *janābah*, but with *janābah* the *ghusl* is enough as the traditions show.

The same law has been explained in the verse of the chapter of "Women": *nor when you are in a state of major ritual impurity—unless (you are) travelling on the road—until you have washed yourselves* (4:43). The verse under discussion is more elaborate as it names the bath as cleanliness. This cleanliness is other than that which one usually gets from taking bath which it is an effect of that bath; but the cleanliness mentioned in this verse refers to the very act of taking bath (as it removes spiritual uncleanness); while in this context removing physical uncleanness and dirt from the body by using water is called *al-Tanazzuf*. There is a tradition from Imam: "Whatever water flows on becomes clean." This rule is inferred from this very verse.

***... and if you are sick or on a journey, or one among you comes from privy, or you have touched the women, and you do not find water, betake yourselves to clean earth*:** Now begins the rule which applies to a person who does not have water for cleansing or bath. The four situations which are joined with the particle of conjunction "or" are not opposite to each other in reality; sickness and journey by themselves do not cause *al-hadath* (the things because of which *wudū*ʾ or *ghusl* becomes necessary); they may demand *wudū*ʾ or *ghusl* when a small or big *hadath* takes place in that condition. The last two alternatives do not stand face to face with the first two; rather both of the first two alternatives are divided into the last two. That is why someone has said that "or" in the clause: "or one among you comes from privy," is used in the meaning of "and," as we shall describe later. Moreover, the reasons justifying *tayammum* are not limited to sickness or journey; there are other causes too.

God has mentioned sickness and journey and in these two conditions one is generally unable to get or use water whenever he wishes; and He has mentioned coming from toilet and touching the women—and unavailability of water in these two conditions is a matter of chance. Conversely, it may be said that looking at the physical structure of man, his being sick or on journey is a matter of chance while going to toilet or touching of the women are physical necessities. The first causes small *hadath,* which is removed by *wudū*ʾ and the second brings on big *hadath* which is removed by *ghusl.* In all the four situations with which man becomes

involved sometimes by chance and at other times by nature, he is obliged to do *tayammum* when he cannot get water.

Unavailability of water metaphorically denotes inability to use water. It means that unavailability of water is a condition for all the four situations including sickness.

The above explanation shows that:

First: The sickness mentioned in this verse is the one, which prevents a man from using water as the condition: "and you do not find water" shows; rather the context of the whole speech gives this connotation.

Second: "Or on a journey" is another alternative in which man is involved by chance and during which sometime water becomes unavailable; it is not restricted by the words: "or one among you comes from privy"; rather it is in conjunction with the words: "wash your faces." So the meaning will be as follows: When you rise up for prayer while you are on a journey and you do not find water then do *tayammum.* As the sentence: *when you rise up to prayer, wash your faces ...* had not required any conditional clause, this order of *tayammum* also does not need any such condition as both are in conjunction with each other.

Third: The Divine words: "or one among you comes from the privy" is another independent situation. Someone has said that "or" has been used here in the meaning of "and"; as God has said in another context: *And We sent him to a hundred thousand, rather, they exceeded* (87:147). But this interpretation is unwarranted. Apart from that, the word "*aw*" (or, rather) in the verse brought in evidence is not in the meaning of "and"; it is used in its literal meaning as we have translated it with the word "rather." It does not show that the speaker was unsure of their number; it just means that the situation or condition was indefinite. The same interpretation is given to other such expressions whenever they occur in the Qur'an. For example: *... so that you may guard (against evil)*, (2:21); *... had they but known this* (2:102).

This sentence has the same construction of conjunction as the previous two. The meaning will be: When you rise up to prayer and one of you had come from privy and you do not find water then you should do *tayammum*.

It may easily be inferred from these wordings that when a man has not broken his *al-Tahārah* (here it means *wudū*ʾ or *tayammum*) with small *hadath* then he does not have to repeat his *wudū*ʾ or *tayammum*; it supports those *ahādīth* which show that a man who has done *tahārah* is not

obliged to repeat it.

The Divine words, "or one among you comes from privy" teach good manner; *al-ghāit* (a depressed plot or pit); people used to sit in such places to relieve themselves in order to be hidden from public eyes; the Qur'an uses the expression "coming from depressed place or privy" and it alludes to relieving oneself. Nowadays, the word *al-ghāit* is used for human excrements but it is a vulgar usage, which has come up in later centuries. The same is the position of *al-ʾadhrah*; its literal meaning is threshold of the door. As the people used to empty their lavatory in front of their houses, the word *al-ʾadhrah* gradually came to mean faeces, as al-Jawharī has explained in *al-Sihāh*.

Also, the Qur'an has not said: "or you come from privy"; because it would have pinpointed the one involved. Nor has it said: "or one of you has come from privy" because this possessive construction too would have shown a sort of specification. Rather, it went further in vagueness and ambiguity and said: "or one among you comes from privy." This was done to teach Muslims polite manner of speaking.

Fourth: "Or you have touched the women." This too, like previous clauses, is an independent condition; and the conjunction and the meaning are like previous phrases. Touching the women is an allusion to sexual intercourse. This too, shows the polite manner of speech, as to how one should keep one's tongue from clearly expressing what the human nature doesn't like to talk freely about.

One might say that, in that case, the preceding expression, "and if you are under obligation to perform a total ablution," would have been more appropriate because it was more decent; but it would have missed the main point of the speech. The present expression shows that it is something, which a man by nature is inclined to do, while the previous phrase lacks this indication.

Someone has said that "touching the women" means exactly what it says and it doesn't indicate sexual intercourse. However, it is a very wrong interpretation because it goes against the context of the verse. God has begun the speech by describing the order concerning small *hadath* and that is *wudūʾ*, and then the order regarding big *hadath*, that is, *janābah* after which one normally has to take bath. Then the speech turns to these very situations in unusual circumstances, when one doesn't get water; so it describes the substitute of *wudūʾ*, that is, *tayammum*. Now, the context

demands that the substitute of bath too should be mentioned and that is why it has mentioned touching of the women alluding to sexual intercourse. There was no reason why only the substitute of *wudū*ʾ should be mentioned ignoring that of *ghusl* altogether.

Fifth: The above explanations do not leave room for many objections brought against the verse as may be seen from the following:

The mention of sickness or being on a journey is irrelevant, because sickness or journey don't obligate one to do *tayammum* unless one has undergone a *hadath* or has touched the women; but the small *hadath* and the sexual intercourse would make *tayammum* necessary even if one is not sick or on journey.

Reply: Small *hadath* and sexual intercourse are not to be joined with sickness and journey; all four are independent situations as was explained earlier.

The second alternative "or on a journey" is irrelevant and the reason is the same as given in the first objection. Sickness is an excuse, which can prevent use of available water; it does not indicate unavailability of water. Therefore, it was necessary to say "and you do not find water"; and in absence of water [one has to do *tayammum*]; so being sick or on a journey has no relevance here.

Reply: The phrase: "and you do not find water" is an allusion to inability to use water, no matter whether it is because of unavailability of water or otherwise.

It was enough to say: "you do not find water," and all the situations mentioned before it would be covered in this one phrase; so if the phrases: "if you are sick or on a journey or one among you comes from the privy or you have touched the women," were omitted it would have been shorter and clearer.

Reply: If those phrases were omitted, all the fine points mentioned earlier would have been lost.

It would have been better if the phrase were changed to the following: "and if you are unable to use water," because this amended phrase would have covered the sickness plus other excuses.

Reply: The present phrase alludes to that meaning too and it is more eloquent.

***... betake yourselves to clean earth and wipe a part of your faces and (part of) your hands therewith*:** *al-Tayammum* (to intend*); al-Saʾīd* (face of the earth) *al-Tayyib*, a thing is called *tayyib* when it is in its natural

condition. This adjective used for the earth indicates that the earth should be in its natural condition like soil or common stones. It excludes the items, which are separated from earth by burning or through other natural processes like cement, potteries, and minerals. God says: *And as for the good land, its vegetation springs forth (abundantly) by the permission of its Lord, and (as for) that which is bad (its herbage) comes forth but scantily* (7:58). This adjective has given rise to the conditions mentioned in traditions for the soil, which may be used in *tayammum*. Also, it is said that *al-Tayyib* means clean; in that case, it indicates the condition of cleanliness for the earth of *tayammum*.

The phrase: "and wipe a part of your faces and (part of) your hands therewith," shows that one has to wipe those organs in *tayammum* which one was required to wash in *wudū*ʾ. We may say that *tayammum* is a shortened alternative of *wudū*ʾ from which the two wiping (of head and feet) have been omitted and the two washing (of face and hands) substituted with the wiping; and water has given way to soil—to remove hardships.

This shows that the two organs of *tayammum* are the same two which were washed in *wudū*ʾ. As God has used the preposition "*bi*" with the verb of wiping, it indicates that the wiping in *tayammum* should apply to only some parts of the two organs, that is a part of face and a part of hands. It totally fits on the explanations narrated from the Imams of Ahl al-Bayt that the part of face to be wiped in *tayammum* is the forehead only and the part of hand to be wiped is from wrist downwards.

This explanation shows invalidity of some people's opinion that the hand to be wiped in *tayammum* covers from armpit to finger tips; or what has been said by others that the whole part of hand washed in *wudū*ʾ should be wiped in *tayammum*. Clearly, the verb *al-mash* (to wipe) followed by preposition "*bi*" indicates that only a part of the organ is to be wiped.

"*Min*" in "*minhu*" translated here as "therewith" shows that wiping of face and hands should begin with earth; and traditions have explained that *tayammum* should start with hitting the hands on earth and then wiping the face and hands with it.

Someone has said:

> "*Min*" here indicates apportioning. In other words, there should remain attached to the palms some parts of earth (like dust) which would be used for wiping the face and the hands. According to him, *tayammum* would not be valid on a smooth stone on which there is no dust, etc.

Comment: The meaning that we have given is more in keeping with the wording of the Qur'an.

... Allah does not desire to put on you any difficulty but He wishes to purify you: "*Min haraj*" (translated here as any difficulty) literally means any kind of difficulty. It puts emphasis on the negative connotation. There is no commandment in religion, which could create difficulty; that is why the negative is attached to the Divine desire and not to difficulty.

Difficulty can be of two types:

(1) A difficulty which results from the nature of the commandment itself; that is, the commandment itself becomes a source of difficulty. God hasn't given any such order. For example, He has not forbidden eating tasty foods with a view of creating a knack for self-denial, because such an order would have created difficulty by its very nature.

(2) A difficulty, which temporarily happens in implementation of an order. For example, if someone cannot stand in prayer because of illness, this rule will be waived for him but the general rule will continue to apply to others.

The phrase: "but He wishes to purify you" after the preceding clause: "God does not desire to put on you any difficulty," shows that God has not laid down any rule with the aim of creating difficulties for human beings. The verse means: Our aim in these laid down rules is to purify you and the main purpose is to complete our favors on you; not that We want to put you in trouble or difficulty. That is why when We found that *wudū'* or *ghusl* was difficult for you in the absence of water, We changed that order to *tayammum* which you can easily do; we have not totally waived the order of *tahārah* because we want to purify you and complete our favors on you, so that you may be grateful.

... but He wishes to purify you so that He may complete His favor on you that you may be grateful: The preceding explanation shows that the main purpose of *wudū'*, *ghusl* and *tayammum* is to make you purified through these modes of *tahārah*. This *tahārah* is not from *al-khabath* [an uncleanness which doesn't require *an-niyyah* (intention) for its removal]; but it is a spiritual purification which one gets through these three modes of *tahārah* and which is the condition for validity of prayer.

It may be inferred from these words that if a person continues in *tahārah* and does not get any *hadath*, then he is not required to repeat his *tahārah* for the next prayer. Although the opening phrase: *when you rise up to prayer*, is unrestricted, it does not mean that one has to do *wudū'*, *ghusl*

or *tayammum* before every prayer because not every order is obligatory. [In the situation mentioned above, one is only recommended to renew one's *tahārah*.]

The clause: "so that He may complete His favor on you," the meaning of favor and its completion was explained in the verse 3 of this chapter: *This day have I perfected for you your religion and completed my favor on you*; and the meaning of gratefulness was given in the verse 144 of chapter 3: *And Allah will reward the grateful*. Accordingly, the favor in this verse means the religion (not in the sense of its particular beliefs and commandments) but in the meaning of submission to God in all conditions and situations. This entails acceptance of God's authority over His servants in whatever He obligates them to do. That authority will be completed if the shariah covers all religious commandments, small parts of which are the three types of *tahārah*.

The verse gives two reasons for this order; To purify the believers and to complete His favor on them.

These two are different from one another. The first reason gives the purpose of legislating the three modes of purification while completion of favor is the purpose of legislating the whole shariah, and the three modes of *tahārah* are a small part of it. In other words, the two reasons are particular and general. Accordingly, the clauses would mean as follows. We have laid down the three purifications so that you could purify yourselves with them. They are a part of the religion. When the whole shariah will be legislated, God's favor on you will be completed in order that you may be grateful to God, so that He may choose you for Himself. Ponder on it.

وَاذْكُرُوا نِعْمَةَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَمِيثَاقَهُ الَّذِي وَاثَقَكُمْ بِهِ إِذْ قُلْتُمْ سَمِعْنَا وَأَطَعْنَا ۖ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُورِ ﴿٧﴾

(5:07) ***And remember the favor of Allah on you and the covenant with which He bound you firmly, when you said: "We have heard and we obey," and fear Allah; surely Allah knows what is in the breasts.***

That was the covenant which was taken from them. They were expected to surrender to God as God reminds them with the words: "when you said: 'We have heard and we obey.'" It is unconditional listening and unconditional obedience; in other words, it is Islam. The favor of God in the

clause: "And remember the favor of God on you," points to the graceful gifts which God bestowed on them under protection of Islam. If they compared their condition in the days of ignorance with that after entering into Islam, they would find themselves enjoying peace, well-being, affluence, purity of hearts and purity of deeds; as God says: *And remember the favor of Allah on you when you were enemies, then He united your hearts so by His bounty you became brethren; and you were on the brink of a pit of fire then He delivered you from it* (3:103).

Alternatively, the favor may refer to the reality of Islam; Islam is the mother of all favors that nourishes all other favors as we have described earlier. When we say that Divine favor refers to Islam or to Divine authority, we are aiming at pinpointing the examples of favor. We are not trying to find out the meaning of the word; meanings are known from dictionaries and we are not concerned with it here.

Then God reminds them of His Omniscience and that God knows the hidden secrets of the hearts. So, He has ordered them to fear Him: *and fear Allah; surely Allah knows what is in the breasts*.

Examining Narrations

(1) al-Tūsī narrates with his *asnād* from al-Ṣādiq about the words of God: *when you rise up to prayer*, that he said, "When you rise up from sleep." The narrator (Ibn Bakīr) says, "I said 'Does sleep break *wudū*ʾ?' He (the Imam) said, 'Yes, when it overwhelms hearing and he doesn't hear voices.'" (*Tahdhīb al-ahkām*).

Author's comments: This meaning is also narrated in other traditions and al-Suyūtī has narrated it in *al-Durr al-manthūr* from Zayd b. Aslam and al-Nahhās. It doesn't go against the explanations given in the Commentary that rising up to prayer means intending to pray, because what we have said explains the meaning of "rising to" and the tradition explains the meaning of "rising from."

(2) al-Kulaynī narrates through his chain of narrators from Zurārah that he said, "I said to Abū Jaʾfar, 'From where did you know and say that wiping should be done to a part of head and a part of feet.' He (the Imam) laughed and said, 'O Zurārah! The Messenger of God has said so and the Book has been revealed by God with this order, because God, the Mighty, the Great, says: *wash your faces*, so we know that the whole face should be washed. Then He says: *and your hands as far as the elbows*; in this way, the hands

up to the elbows have been joined with face (in one order) and we know that they too should be washed up to the elbows. Then He disjointed the speech and said: *and wipe a part of your heads*; when He used the preposition "*bi*" before "your heads," we understood that wiping should cover only a part of the head. Then He joined the feet with the head (in that order) as had joined the hands with the face, and said: *and your feet to the ankles*. Now, because He has joined them with the head, we know that wiping should cover only a part of the feet. Then the Messenger of God explained it to the people but they neglected it. Then (God) said: *and (if) you do not find water, betake yourselves to clean earth and wipe a part of your faces and (part of) your hands therewith.* When *wudū*ʾ was waived in the absence of water, wiping (with earth) was ordered for part of (the organs) which were washed (in *wudū*ʾ) because He has said: *part of your faces*, then has joined with it the hands (that is, parts of it). Then He has said: *therewith*, that is, in *tayammum*. It was so ordained because God knew that the wiping with earth would not cover the whole face as the earth adheres to parts of the palms leaving other portions untouched. Then God said: *Allah does not desire to put on you any difficulty*; and *al-haraj* means difficulty.'" (*al-Kāfi*).

Author's comments: The clause: *and (if) you do not find water*, paraphrases the verse making its meaning clearer.

(3) Also al-Kulaynī narrates through his chain of narrators from Zurārah and Bakīr that both of them asked Abū Jaʾfar about the *wudū*ʾ of the Messenger of God. He (the Imam) asked for a wash-bowl with water; he dipped his right hand, scooped a handful of water and pouring it on his face washed the face with it; then he dipped his left hand and scooped a handful of water and pouring it on his right arm washed the arm from the elbow to the palm without returning the hand to the elbow; then he dipped his right palm (in the water) and poured it on his left arm and did as he had done with the right arm; then he wiped his head and feet with wetness of his palms without adding new water to them. Then he said, "One should not insert his fingers under the shoelace." Then (the Imam) said, "Surely God, the Mighty, the Great, says: *When you rise up to prayer, wash your faces and your hands*, it is therefore not proper to leave any part of one's face

without washing and God has ordered to wash the hands to the elbows, it is therefore not proper for him to leave any part of his hands up to the elbows without washing, because God says: *wash your faces and your hands as far as the elbows*. Then God has said: *and wipe a part of your heads and your feet to the ankles*. So, if he wiped a part of his head or a part of his feet between the ankles and toe-tips, his *wudū*ʾ will be completed." The narrators said, "We asked, 'Where are the ankles?' (The Imam) said, 'Here (pointing to the joint of feet with bone of leg).' We said, 'What is this?' (The Imam) said, 'This is the bone of leg, and ankle is below it.' Then we asked, 'May God make your affairs good! One handful (of water) is enough for the face and one handful for the arm?' (The Imam) said, 'Yes, if you use it properly and two handfuls cover the whole *wudū*ʾ.'" (*ibid.*)

Author's comments: This tradition is well known; al-ʿAyyāshī has narrated it from Bakīr and Zurārah from Abū Jaʾfar and has narrated a similar tradition through Abdullāh b. Sulaymān from Abū Jaʾfar; also there are other traditions having similar connotation as well as of the preceding tradition in other books.

(4) al-ʿAyyāshī has narrated from Zurārah b. Aʾyan; and Abū Hanīfah has narrated from Abū Bakīr b. Hazm that they said, "A man did *wudū*ʾ and did *mash* on his socks and entering the mosque performed his prayer. Then came there ʿAlī and trampled his neck under foot and said, 'Woe unto you! You are praying without *wudū*ʾ!' He said, ' ʿUmar b. al-Khattāb has ordered me (to do *wudū*ʾ like this).' So, ʿAlī caught his hand, brought him to ʿUmar and said, 'Look what this (man) is narrating from you (and his voice was raised).' ʿUmar said, 'Yes. I have ordered him (to do like it). Verily, the Messenger of God had done *mash* (in similar way).' ʿAlī said, 'Was it before the revelation of (the chapter of) "The Table" or after it?' He said, 'I don't know.' ʿAlī said, 'Then why do you give *fatwā* when you don't know. The Book (of God) has left socks behind.'" (*Tafsīr al-burhān*).

Author's comments: There had appeared a controversy during the reign of ʿUmar about *mash* on socks, and it was the judgement of ʿAlī that it was abrogated by the verse of the chapter of "The Table," as appears from the traditions. That is why it has been narrated from some companions like al-Barāʾ, Bilāl and Jarīr b. ʿAbdillāh that they had narrated from the

Prophet, (permission of) *mash* on socks after revelation of the chapter of "The Table." [In this way they tried to justify ʿUmar's *fatwā*.] But these traditions are not free from confusion. Perhaps they thought that the abrogation of the wiping on socks was not based on the Qur'anic verse. But it is not so, because the verse confirms the wiping on the feet up to the ankles and socks are certainly not parts of the feet. The same is the connotation of the coming tradition.

(5) al-ʿAyyāshī narrates from Muḥammad b. Ahmad al-Khurāsānī (and the *hadīth* is *marfūʾ*) that he said, "A man came to the Leader of the Faithful, and asked him about the *mash* on socks. The Imam bowed his head for sometime; then he raised the head and said, 'Verily God, the Blessed, the High, has ordered His servants to do *tahārah* and divided it among the organs; so He gave a share of it to the face and a share of it to the head and a share of it to the feet and a share of it to the hands. Now, if your socks are among these organs you may do *mash* on them.'" (*al-Tafsīr,* al-ʿAyyāshī)

(6) Again, he narrates from al-Hasan b. Zayd from Jaʾfar b. Muḥammad that he said, "Verily ʿAlī opposed the people in the reign of ʿUmar b. al-Khattāb regarding the *mash* on socks. They said, 'We had seen the Prophet doing *mash* on socks.' ʿAlī said, 'Was it before the revelation of "The Table" or after it?' They said, 'We don't know.' ʿAlī, said, 'But I know that the Prophet left wiping on the socks when "The Table" was revealed. And that I do *mash* on a donkey's back is preferable to me than doing *mash* on the socks.' Then he recited this verse: *O you who believe! When you rise up to prayer wash your faces and your hands as far as the elbows, and wipe a part of your heads and your feet to the ankles.*" (*ibid.*)

(7) al-Suyūtī writes: Ibn Jarīr and al-Nahhās (in his *Nāsikh*) have narrated about ʿAlī that he was doing (fresh) *wudūʾ* for each *salāt* and used to recite: *O you who believe! When you rise up to prayer ...* (*al-Durr al-manthūr*)

Author's comments: Its explanation has been given earlier.

(8) al-Kulaynī narrates through his chain of narrates from al-Halabī from Abū ʿAbdillāh that he said, "I asked him (the Imam) about the words of God, the Mighty, the Great: *or you have touched the women*. He (the Imam) said, 'It means sexual intercourse; but

God is concealed and He prefers to cover. Therefore, He did not (clearly) name the act as you do.'" (*al-Kāfī*)

(9) al-ʿAyyāshī narrates from Zurārah that he said, "I asked Abū Jaʾfar, about *tayammum*. He said, 'Verily ʿAmmār b. Yāsir came to the Prophet and said, "I was in condition of *janābah* and I had no water with me." The Prophet asked. "What did you do? O ʿAmmār!" He said, "I removed my clothes and then I turned round over the earth." (The Prophet) said, "The donkeys too do the same. God has said: *and wipe a part of your faces and (part of) your hands therewith.*" Then (the Prophet) put his hands together on the earth and wiped them. Then, he wiped from his forehead until below the eyebrows; then rubbed on hand with the other on the back of the palm, beginning with the right hand.'" (*al-Tafsīr*, al-ʿAyyāshī)

(10) Zurārah narrates from Abū Jaʾfar that he said, "God laid down washing for the face and the arms, and *mash*, for the head and feet. When man happened to be overcome by journey, sickness or other needs, God removed the washing and changed it to wiping. Then he recited: *and if you are sick or on a journey, or one among you comes from privy, or you have touched the women, and you do not find water, betake yourselves to clean earth and wipe a part of your faces and (part of) your hands therewith.*" (*ibid.*)

(11) ʿAbd al-Aʾlā Mawlā Āl Sām says, "I said to Abū ʿAbdillāh, 'I stumbled and my nail was broken. So I put a bandage on my toe. How should I do *wudū*ʾ?' The Imam said, 'The order for this and similar situations is known from the Book of God, the Blessed, the High: *and (Allah) has not laid upon you any hardship in religion,* (22:78).'" (*ibid.*)

Author's comments: This refers to the verse of the chapter of "The Pilgrimage" which disallows difficulties. The Imam did not refer the clause of the similar meaning in the verse of *wudū*ʾ and went to the last verse of the chapter of "The Pilgrimage." It shows that non-imposition of difficulty has the same meaning in both places. The traditions quoted above contain many fine points which may be understood if one keeps in mind the explanations we have given regarding these verse; that commentary may also be taken as explanation of the traditions.

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Verses 8–14

The connection of the verse with the preceding ones is clear and needs no elaboration. The series of the verses is addressed to the believers, pointing to some important matters, which affect them individually and collectively in both worlds.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُونُوا قَوَّامِينَ لِلَّهِ شُهَدَاءَ بِالْقِسْطِ ۖ وَلَا يَجْرِمَنَّكُمْ شَنَآنُ قَوْمٍ عَلَىٰ أَلَّا تَعْدِلُوا ۚ اعْدِلُوا هُوَ أَقْرَبُ لِلتَّقْوَىٰ ۖ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٨﴾

(5:08) ***O you who believe! Be upright for Allah, bearers of witness with justice, and let not hatred of a people incite you not to act equitably; act equitably, that is nearer to piety, and fear Allah; surely Allah is Aware of what you do.***

The verse is similar to the verse 135 of the chapter "Women," *O you who believe! Be maintainers of justice bearers of witness for Allah's sake, though it may be against your own selves or (your) parents or near relatives; if he be rich or poor, Allah is nearer to them both in compassion; therefore do not follow (your) low desires, lest you deviate; and if you swerve or turn aside, then surely Allah is aware of what you do*.

However, there is a subtle difference between the two verses. The verse of the chapter of "Women" forbids deviation from justice in bearing witness because of some low desires; the person loves the man for whom he bears witness because of some relationship or friendship, etc. and therefore, gives evidence in his favor in order that he might get some undue benefits. Conversely, this verse of the chapter of "The Table" prohibits deviation from justice while bearing witness because of hatred and enmity for the person against whom evidence is tendered; he bears witness against him intending to take some revenge from him and thus tramples on his rights.

This difference of themes has brought difference of stipulations in the clauses of the two verses. The verse in the chapter of "Women" says: *Be maintainers of justice, bearers of witness for Allah's sake*; while this verse

in the chapter of "The Table" turns the restrictions around and says: "be upright for God, bearers of witness with justice."

The main purpose of this verse is to restrain the believers from going against truth in bearing witness because of some enmity that the witness might be entertaining against the party concerned. Therefore, the evidence is attached to justice, meaning that one should observe justice while giving evidence; the evidence should not contain even an iota of injustice, even if the person concerned is one's enemy. On the other hand, evidence in favor of someone because of love or relationship (even if it goes against the right) is not counted such a deviation from justice although in reality it is not free from injustice and deviation. Therefore, the verse in the chapter of "The Table" enjoins bearing witness with justice and it has been based on the order of being upright for the sake of God; while the order in the chapter of "Women" enjoins giving evidence for the sake of God, that is, without following base desires and it is based on the order of being upright with justice.

The same is the reason why in the verse of "The Table" the order to bear witness with justice leads to the order of acting equitably as God says: *act equitably, that is nearer to piety*; it calls to justice and counts it as a means of acquiring piety. And in the verse of the chapter "Women," the order has been reversed and the command to bear witness for God is followed by the phrases: *do not follow your (low) desires lest you deviate*. Thus, God prohibits the believers from following one's low desire and discarding of piety; and counts it as a means of deviating from justice.

Then, both the verses warn them against deviation from piety, using almost similar wordings. The verse of the chapter of "Women" says: *and if you swerve or turn aside, then surely Allah is aware of what you do*, that is, if you don't keep firm hold of piety; and the verse of the chapter of "The Table" says: *and fear Allah, surely Allah is Aware of what you do*.

The meaning of the wording: "be upright for God, bearers of witness with justice ...," may easily be understood from explanations of previous verses.

... act equitably, that is nearer to piety: The pronoun "that" refers to justice that is understood from the order of acting equitably. The meaning is clear.

وَعَدَ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ لَهُمْ مَغْفِرَةٌ وَأَجْرٌ عَظِيمٌ ﴿٩﴾

(5:9) ***Allah has promised to those who believe and do good deeds: they shall have forgiveness and a mighty reward.***

The sentence: "they shall have forgiveness and a might reward," elaborates the divine promise given to those who believe and do good deeds. This verse presents this divine promise more forcefully than does the verse 29 of the chapter of "Victory": *Allah has promised those among them who believe and do good forgiveness and a great reward*. It is because the verse under discussion clearly and independently describes the promise while the verse of the chapter of "Victory" mentions it as a part of the sentence. Someone has said that it is more emphatic because it is news after news; but this reasoning is not correct.

وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَكَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا أُولَٰئِكَ أَصْحَابُ الْجَحِيمِ ﴿١٠﴾

(5:10) ***And (as for) those who disbelieve and reject our signs, these are the companions of the flame.***

al-Rāghib has said:

> "*al-Jahmah* means intensely searing fire; and from it is derived the word *al-jahīm* (the Hell)."

The threat contained in this verse stands opposite to the promise of the preceding verse: *they shall have forgiveness and a mighty reward*.

In this verse, disbelief is qualified with rejection of the Divine message; the aim is to exclude a disbelief, which is not joined with rejection of the Divine signs and commandments.

When someone knows that the Divine sign is true and does not reject it [yet does not follow it properly] then his case is in the hands of God; if He wishes He would forgive him; otherwise He might give him punishment. The two verses contain good promise for those believers who do good deeds and stern threat to those who disbelieve and reject the Divine signs. Between these two extremes, there are many intermediate stages and stations. God has kept their conditions vague and ambiguous.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اذْكُرُوا نِعْمَتَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ إِذْ هَمَّ قَوْمٌ أَنْ يَبْسُطُوا إِلَيْكُمْ أَيْدِيَهُمْ فَكَفَّ أَيْدِيَهُمْ عَنْكُمْ ۖ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ ۚ وَعَلَى اللَّهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿١١﴾

(5:11) ***O you who believe! Remember Allah's favor on you when a people had determined to stretch forth their hands towards you, but He withheld their hands from you, and fear Allah; and on Allah let the believers rely.***

These wordings may be applied to various incidents andevents which had taken place between the infidels and the Muslims; for example, the battles of Badr, Uhud and Ahzāb, etc. Apparently, it is a general description and refers to the polytheists' continuous efforts to kill the believers, erase Islam, and annihilate the religion of *tawhīd*.

Some exegetes have said that it refers to the polytheists' conspiracy to kill the Prophet or to plan of some Jews to assassinate him, but the apparent wording does not support this particularization, as may be seen clearly.

***... and fear Allah, and on Allah let the believers rely*:** This exhortation for piety and reliance on God in fact points to intense warning and total prohibition of neglecting the piety and discarding reliance on God. We say so because this command is immediately followed by the description of making covenant with the Children of Israel and also with those who said: "*We are Christians.*" Both groups had broken the Divine covenant that made them the target of Divine curse, and their hearts were hardened consequently; thus they neglected a portion of their religions. Consequently, God created enmity and hatred among them up to the Day of Resurrection.

The incident has been referred to, only to make the believers aware that the Jews and the Christians have been meted out the punishment because they had forgotten the Divine covenant; they had undertaken that they would surrender themselves to God and had reinforced it with the promise of obeying the God's commands. Accordingly they should have desisted from going against the Divine rules and should have relied on God in their religious affairs. They should have taken what God had chosen for them and left what He did not like them to do. Its only way was to obey their Messengers by believing in them and not following anyone other than God and His Messenger. They should not have listened to those arrogant and insolent persons who called them to submit to their authority, even if they were their religious scholars and monks. There should be no obedience except to God or to him who calls to God's obedience.

But they threw the Divine guidance behind their backs. As a result they were removed far from Divine mercy; they altered the Divine speech

from its place and interpreted it in a way that was against the Divine ideas; as a result, they neglected and forgot the important parts of the religion.

It was a part on which all good and happiness depended. When they abandoned it, every happiness, felicity, and good departed from their lives, and what was left of religion in their hands, that too was contaminated and spoiled. Religion is a composite entity of beliefs and rules, every part of which is intertwined with all other parts; if a part is spoiled all other parts are adversely affected, especially if the spoiled part was related to the basics. For example, a person prays but not for the sake of God, spends in charities but not to seek the pleasure of God or fights but not for raising the word of truth. Such people cannot get benefit of what has remained in their hands because it is altered and rotten; and what they had neglected of the religion would not be of any help to them in the hereafter. Nobody can do without religion especially its fundamental principles.

It is seen from the above that the context demands that the believers should be warned against neglecting the piety and discarding the reliance on God. This purpose is served by referring to that event and inviting them to ponder on it.

Also it appears from the above that reliance on God should cover all legislative and creative matters or may be the legislations only; in other words, God has commanded the believer to obey God and His Messenger in religious commandments and accept whatever the Messenger has brought and explained to them; they should entrust the religious affairs and Divine commandments to their Lord; should refrain from thinking that they were independent or that they could manipulate the Divine shariah which the Messenger has brought to them. Also, they should conform to the system of the cause and effect laid down by God in the universe. But they should not ascribe to it any independent authority. They should not give to it any shade of Lordship. They should always remain waiting for what God decides or chooses for them by His own management and will.

وَلَقَدْ أَخَذَ اللَّهُ مِيثَاقَ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ وَبَعَثْنَا مِنْهُمُ اثْنَيْ عَشَرَ نَقِيبًا ۖ وَقَالَ
اللَّهُ إِنِّي مَعَكُمْ ۖ لَئِنْ أَقَمْتُمُ الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَيْتُمُ الزَّكَاةَ وَآمَنْتُمْ بِرُسُلِي
وَعَزَّرْتُمُوهُمْ وَأَقْرَضْتُمُ اللَّهَ قَرْضًا حَسَنًا لَأُكَفِّرَنَّ عَنْكُمْ سَيِّئَاتِكُمْ
وَلَأُدْخِلَنَّكُمْ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ ۚ فَمَنْ كَفَرَ بَعْدَ ذَٰلِكَ

مِنْكُمْ فَقَدْ ضَلَّ سَوَاءَ السَّبِيلِ ﴿١٢﴾

(5:12) ***And certainly Allah made a covenant with the Children of Israel, and We raised from among them twelve chieftains; and Allah said: "Surely I am with you, if you keep up prayer and pay zakāt and believe in My Messengers and assist them and offer to Allah a goodly loan, I will most certainly cover your evil deeds, and I will most certainly cause you to enter gardens beneath which rivers flow, but whoever disbelieves from among you after that, he indeed shall lose the right way."***

al-Rāghib has said:

> "*al-Naqīb* (translated here as chieftain) denotes the one who investigates or explores the condition of his people; it is derived from *al-naqb* (breaching or boring a wall or a hide); plural = *al-nuqabāʾ*. "

God narrates to the believers of this *ummah* what had happened to the Children of Israel. They were given their religious commandments; a covenant was made with them that they would remain steadfast in religion. Chieftains were appointed for them and the shariah was promulgated, and thus the proof of God was completed against them. And what was their response to all that? They broke the covenant and in return, God cursed them and made their hearts stone hard. God says: "And certainly God made a covenant with the Children of Israel." It is mentioned several times in the chapter of "The Cow," and in other place: "and we raised among them twelve chieftains"; apparently, they were the heads of the twelve tribes. They were a sort of rulers over them; their relationship with their tribes was in a way like that of *Ulu al-Amr vis-à-vis* people of this ummah; they had the authority in the worldly and religious affairs although they did not receive any divine revelation nor had they any right to legislate any shariah (because this is reserved for God and His Messenger). "And God said: 'Surely I am with you.'" This is a commitment that God would protect and look after them. It follows that God would help them if they obeyed Him and would abandon them if they disobeyed. That is why this sentence is followed by these two conditions: "if you keep up prayer and pay *zakāt* and believe in My Messengers and assist them."[1] "My Messengers" refers to

1 *al-Taʾzīz* means to help respectfully. (Auth.)

those who were to come in future like Jesus and Muḥammad, and all those whom God raised between Moses and Muḥammad (peace be on them all); "And offer to God a goodly loan," it refers to non-obligatory spending in the way of God, not the obligatory *zakāt*: "'I will most certainly cover your evil deeds, and I will most certainly cause you to enter gardens beneath which rivers flow.'" This is the goodly promise given by God and it is followed by these words: "but whoever disbelieves from among you after that, he indeed shall lose the right way."

فَبِمَا نَقْضِهِمْ مِيثَاقَهُمْ لَعَنَّاهُمْ وَجَعَلْنَا قُلُوبَهُمْ قَاسِيَةً ۖ يُحَرِّفُونَ الْكَلِمَ
عَنْ مَوَاضِعِهِ ۙ وَنَسُوا حَظًّا مِمَّا ذُكِّرُوا بِهِ ۚ وَلَا تَزَالُ تَطَّلِعُ عَلَىٰ خَائِنَةٍ
مِنْهُمْ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا مِنْهُمْ ۖ فَاعْفُ عَنْهُمْ وَاصْفَحْ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿١٣﴾

(5:13) ***But on account of their breaking their covenant We cursed them and made their hearts hard; they altered the words from their places and they neglected a portion of what they were reminded of; and you shall always discover treachery in them excepting a few of them; so pardon them and turn away; surely Allah loves those who do good (to others).***

But on account of their breaking their covenant apparently refers to the disbelief mentioned just above about which God has warned that he indeed shall lose the right way.

The particle "*mā*" in *Fabimā naqdihim* gives emphasis to their breaking the covenant; also it creates a vagueness which gives various connotations in different settings; it may show that a certain thing is too big or too small, etc. The meaning: 'Because of their certain contrary behavior against the covenant, We cursed them and made their hearts hard.' Curse means keeping isolated from Divine Mercy. *Qāsiyah* (hard); it was originally used for hard stones; a hard heart is that which doesn't submit to truth, is not affected by mercy. God says: *Has not the time yet come for those who believe that their hearts should be humble for the remembrance of Allah and what has come down of the truth? And (that) they should not be like those who were given the Book before, but the time became prolonged to them, so their hearts hardened, and most of them are transgressors* (57:16).

This hard-heartedness led them to altering the words from their places; this alteration could be by interpreting a Divine speech in a way which God

was not pleased with, that is, misinterpreting it and giving it an uncalled for meaning. Also, it could be by deleting some words or adding or altering it; all these are examples of alteration. In this way they lose the sight of clear realities of religion.

And they neglected a portion of what they were reminded of: That was the portion which contained the fundamentals of religion on which the felicity of both worlds depended; that felicity was replaced by infelicity and hardships. They started believing that God was like His creatures, that the Prophet Moses was the final Prophet, that the shariah of the Torah would continue forever, that *badāʾ* or abrogation of the shariah was invalid and similar other beliefs.

... and you shall always discover treachery in them: it may also be translated as "you shall always find a treacherous group among them excepting a few of them; so pardon them and turn away; surely God loves those who do good (to others)." We have explained several times that exception of a few does not prevent attachment of curse and punishment to the whole group or nation.[1]

وَمِنَ الَّذِينَ قَالُوا إِنَّا نَصَارَىٰ أَخَذْنَا مِيثَاقَهُمْ فَنَسُوا حَظًّا مِمَّا ذُكِّرُوا بِهِ
فَأَغْرَيْنَا بَيْنَهُمُ الْعَدَاوَةَ وَالْبَغْضَاءَ إِلَىٰ يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ ۚ وَسَوْفَ يُنَبِّئُهُمُ اللَّهُ
بِمَا كَانُوا يَصْنَعُونَ ﴿١٤﴾

(5:14) ***And of those who say: "We are Christians," We did take their covenant, but they forgot a portion of what they were admonished with, therefore We excited among them enmity and hatred to the Day of Resurrection; and Allah will inform them of what they did.***

al-Rāghib has said: "*Gharā*" means "became attached"; it is derived from *al-gharāʾ* (glue). Jesus Christ, son of Mary was a Prophet of Mercy; he called people to peace and love and exhorted them to look towards the hereafter keeping aloof from worldly adornments and delights. He strictly

1 A strange interpretation was seen in an exegesis that "a few" refers to ʿAbdullāh b. Salām and his companions. The fact is that ʿAbdullāh b. Salām had entered into Islam long before revelation of the chapter "The Table," while the exception in this verse points to some Jews who had not entered into Islam yet. *(*Auth.*)*

forbade them to fight among themselves for the gains of this life.[1] When they forgot a portion of what they were admonished with, God made their hearts inclined to war and fighting in place of love and peace and exchanged the fraternal feelings which they were taught with enmity and hatred, as He says: "but they forgot a portion of what they were admonished with, therefore, We excited among them enmity and hatred to the Day of Resurrection

This enmity and hatred became ingrained in their psyche, which has fixed its tentacles among these Christian nations. This mind set of theirs is like the Fire of the hereafter from which they cannot escape no matter how hard they strived. *Whenever they will desire to go forth from it, from grief, they shall be turned back into it and taste the chastisement of burning* (22:22). This had begun soon after Jesus, son of Mary was raised up. His disciples and missionaries who roamed from Jerusalem to Rome were entangled in one controversy after another among themselves; and this has kept growing and spreading its tentacles resulting in wars, raids, banishments and anathemas, until it reached to the great world wars which threatened the earth with destruction and humanity with annihilation. All this shows how a Divine bounty turns into Divine revenge and how the endeavours are wasted; and soon God will show them the result of what they were doing.

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1 Refer for it to statements of Christ on various occasions as attributed to him in the four Gospels. (Auth.)

Verses 15–19

It was described above that God had made a covenant with the People of the Book that they would help respectfully His Messengers and would preserve the Book that was revealed to them but they broke the covenant, which they had made with their Creator. After this preamble, God invites them to believe in His Messenger whom He has now sent and the Book, which has been revealed to him. For this purpose, God has introduced the Messenger and the Book to them and has established proof of truth of his messengership and the Book and finally, He has completed that proof for them.

As for the introduction, it is contained in these sentences: *O People the Book! Indeed has come to you Our Messenger making clear to you much of what you concealed of the Book and passing over much; indeed there has come to you a light and a clear Book from Allah*. And then, *O People of the Book! Indeed Our Messenger has come to you explaining to you after a cessation of the Messengers ...*

As for establishment of the proof, we see it in the Divine words: *making clear to you much of what you concealed of the Book and passing over much*. There could be no better proof of the truth of the Prophet who was an unlettered Arab and was revealing to them what they were hiding that could be known only to their own scholars with specialized knowledge. Likewise, the sentence: *with it Allah guides him who follows His pleasure into the ways of peace ...* gives a convincing proof; the true ideas are the best proof for the truth of messengership and veracity of the Book.

As for completing the proof, it is asserted in the last sentence: *lest you say: "There came not to us a giver of good news or a warner," so indeed there has come to you a giver of good news and a warner, and Allah has power over all things*.

Also, God has refuted in the passing the belief of a group of them that: "*Surely, Allah—He is the Messiah, son of Mary,*" and the saying of the Jews and the Christians both: "*We are sons of Allah and his beloved ones.*"

يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ قَدْ جَاءَكُمْ رَسُولُنَا يُبَيِّنُ لَكُمْ كَثِيرًا مِمَّا كُنْتُمْ
تُخْفُونَ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ وَيَعْفُو عَنْ كَثِيرٍ ۚ قَدْ جَاءَكُمْ مِنَ اللَّهِ نُورٌ وَكِتَابٌ

مُبِينٌ ﴿١٥﴾

(5:15) *O People of the Book! Indeed has come to you Our Messenger making clear to you much of what you concealed of the Book and passing over much; indeed there has come to you a light and a clear Book from Allah.*

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We may quote the following verses to see how the Prophet made clear to them what they were hiding: *Those who follow the Messenger, the Prophet, the ummī, whom they find written down with them in the Torah and the Gospel ...* (7:157). *Those whom we have given the Book recognize him as they recognize their sons; ...* (2:146*). Muḥammad is the Messenger of Allah, and those with him are severe against the unbelievers, compassionate among themselves ... that is their description in the Torah and their description in the Gospel; like as seed produce that puts forth its sprout ...* (48:29). Also, as he disclosed the order of stoning which they had hidden and wanted to use the Prophet to get it changed as the verse 41 of this chapter will show: *O Messenger! Let not those grieve you who strive together in hastening to unbelief ...* We find even today the law of stoning clearly mentioned in *Deuteronomy*, 22:23–24. As for the Messenger's passing over much of their misbehavior, suffice it to say that he left undisclosed many things, which they were hiding of their Book. It may be ascertained from the contradictions and errors still found in the Torah and the Gospel. The Torah, for example, contains many things concerning *Tawhīd* (Divine Unity) and Prophethood which cannot be ascribed to God: That He has got a body, He enters into a place and things like that; also unacceptable accusations against the Prophet that they indulged in *kufr*, sins and other misdemeanors. Also, the Torah is totally silent about the resurrection, while no religion can stand on its feet without this important belief. As for the Gospels, they, and especially the Gospel according to St. John are full of idolatrous ideas.

***... indeed there has come to you a light and a clear Book from Allah*:** The construction of the sentence manifestly shows that the coming one depends on God as a speech depends on the speaker and an explanation depends on the explainer. Accordingly, the light would refer to the Qur'an; and in that case the conjunction: "and a clear Book," would be an explicative apposition; thus, the light and the clear Book both would indicate the Qur'an. God has called the Qur'an a light in several places; for example: ...

and follow the light which has been sent down with him ... (7:157). *Therefore believe in Allah and His Messenger and the Light which We have revealed ...* (64:8). *and we have sent to you clear light* (4:174).

Alternatively, the light may refer to the Prophet. This explanation gets support from the beginning of the verse; also, God has called the Prophet, "Light," in the verse 46 of the chapter 33: *... and as a light-giving torch.*

يَهْدِي بِهِ اللَّهُ مَنِ اتَّبَعَ رِضْوَانَهُ سُبُلَ السَّلَامِ وَيُخْرِجُهُمْ مِنَ الظُّلُمَاتِ
إِلَى النُّورِ بِإِذْنِهِ وَيَهْدِيهِمْ إِلَىٰ صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ ﴿١٦﴾

(5:16) ***With it Allah guides him who follows His pleasure into the ways of peace and brings them out of utter darkness into light by His permission and guides them to a straight path.***

The preposition "with" in "with it" is attached to the pronoun of the instrument that refers to the Book or to the Light. It makes no difference whether the light refers to the Prophet or to the Qur'an, because the end result is the same. The Prophet is one of the apparent causes of the guidance and the same is the position of the Qur'an; and the reality of guidance comes from God as He has said: *Surely you cannot guide whom you love, but Allah guides whom He pleases ...* (28:56). *And thus did We reveal to you a spirit by Our command. You did not know what the Book was, nor (what) the faith (was), but We made it a light, guiding thereby whom We please of Our servants; and most surely you guide to the right path. The path of Allah, Whose is whatsoever is in the heavens and whatsoever is in the earth; now surely to Allah do all affairs eventually come* (42:52–53). As you see, these verses ascribe the guidance to the Qur'an and the Prophet and simultaneously, they ascribe it to God; God is the Guide in reality while others are apparent causes who have been brought in this world to revive the guidance.

The guidance of God benefits him who follows His pleasure. In other words, the Divine guidance will affect only those who would follow His pleasure. Guidance in this verse denotes conveyance to the destination; God takes such people to a way or ways of peace or to many such ways, one after another.

Peace is unrestricted; as such, it denotes safety and freedom from all misery and distress that spoil the happiness of life in this world or the hereafter. The Qur'an has described Islam, faith and piety as success,

achievement and security and the peace mentioned here fits perfectly on that. We have described in the first volume of our book while explaining the verse: *Guide us to the straight path* (1:5), that depending on the conditions of the walkers, God has created many lanes in one highway; all walk on the same route related to God which He has named in His Book, 'the straight path': *And (as for) those who strive hard for Us, We will most certainly guide them unto Our ways; and Allah is most surely with the doers of good* (29: 69). *And (know) that this is My path, the straight one, therefore follow it, and follow not (other) ways, for they will lead you away from His way* ... (6:153). God has thus shown that He has laid down many lanes but all lead the walkers to the same destination without differentiating between walkers of one lane from those of the others. It is unlike the ungodly ways where each way leads to a different destination.

The verse thus means—and God knows better—that God guides, and through His Book or through His Prophet, He leads those who follow His pleasure to the ways that protect the walkers from infelicity of the life of this world and the next, and keeps them away from all things which contaminate the happiness of life.

The guidance to peace and happiness revolves around following the Divine pleasure; and God has said: ... *and He does not like kufr in His servants;* ... (39:7*). ... yet surely Allah is not pleased with the transgressing people* (9:96). Ultimately, it depends on keeping aloof from the way of injustice and avoiding any contact with unjust people. God has excluded them from His guidance and made them despaired of reaching this Divine honor, as He has said: ... *and Allah does not guide the unjust people* (62:5). The verse: "with it God guides him who follows His pleasure into the ways of peace," runs in a way parallel to the verse 6:82 which says: *Those who believe and do not mix up their faith with injustice, those are they who have the security and they are those who go aright*.

***... and brings them out of utter darkness into light by His permission and guides them to a straight path*:** *al-Zulumāt* is plural of *al-Zulmah* (darkness). Darkness has been brought in plural while light is singular. It gives an indication that unlike the path of untruth there is no difference or disparity in the path of truth even if it contains various lanes suitable to various spiritual levels.

If bringing out of utter darkness into light is ascribed to someone other than God, like the Prophet or the Book, then the Divine permission means His approval and pleasure; as God says: *(This is) a Book which We*

have revealed to you that you may bring forth men, by their Lord's permission from utter darkness into light ... (14:1). This verse says that the Prophet was to bring them out from darkness to light, and this action has been qualified with permission of their Lord. The idea is to show that the Prophet was not an independent cause of guidance, because its actual cause is God. Soon after that a verse says: *And certainly We sent Moses with Our signs saying: "Bring forth your people from utter darkness into light ..."* (14:5). This verse, has not qualified the guidance with Divine permission because the imperative mood has taken care of that.

When this action is attributed to God then 'bringing them out with His permission' means that God takes them out of darkness with His knowledge; *al-idhn* (permission) has been used for information. They say: *adhina bihi* (learnt of him), that is, was informed about him. The following verses give the same meaning: *And an announcement (information) from Allah and His Messenger ...* (9:3). *But if they turn back, say: "I have given you warning (information) all alike ... "* (21:109). *And proclaim (inform) among men the* hajj ... (22:27); there are several other verses like these.

... and guides them to a straight path: The verb, "guides them," has been repeated because another verb: "and brings them out," has come between "with it God guides Him," in this sentence. Also, we have explained in the chapter of "The Opening" that the straight path is a highway, which contains many lanes. Therefore, guidance to that path also should be a comprehensive one which would include all kinds of guidance.

"A straight path" is a common noun, yet it refers to the same straight path which is unique and which God always ascribes to Himself alone (the only exception is in the chapter of "The Opening" where it is not ascribed to God but the context makes it clear). The common noun serves to enhance its status and magnify its honor.

لَقَدْ كَفَرَ الَّذِينَ قَالُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ الْمَسِيحُ ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ ۚ قُلْ فَمَنْ يَمْلِكُ مِنَ اللَّهِ شَيْئًا إِنْ أَرَادَ أَنْ يُهْلِكَ الْمَسِيحَ ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ وَأُمَّهُ وَمَنْ فِي الْأَرْضِ جَمِيعًا ۗ وَلِلَّهِ مُلْكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا ۚ يَخْلُقُ مَا يَشَاءُ ۚ وَاللَّهُ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴿١٧﴾

(5:17) ***Certainly they disbelieve who say: "Surely, Allah—He is the Messiah, son of Mary." Say: "Who then could control anything as***

against Allah if He wished to destroy the Messiah son of Mary and his mother and all those on the earth together?" And Allah's is the Kingdom of the heavens and the earth and what is between them; He creates what He pleases and Allah has power over all things.

It refers to one of the three sects mentioned in the chapter of "The House of ʿImrān" (Ch. 3) who believed that God had become one with Messiah and Messiah is god and man both at the same time. This sentence may fit to the belief of sonship of Messiah as well as the belief of the three persons in one god. Be it as it may, the sentence points to the belief that Messiah had become one with God.

Say: "Who then could control anything as against Allah if He wished to destroy the Messiah son of Mary and his mother and all those on the earth together?" This is a proof to refute their belief because that belief contains contradiction in term. They say that Messiah is God and at the same time he is man as they have introduced him as the son of Mary; now being a man he is subject to all those changes which afflict any other man on this earth; all human beings like all that is in the heavens and the earth and all that is between them, are owned and controlled by God; they are subjugated under His Kingdom and authority; He can dispose them as He wishes and decides for or against them as He thinks fit; He has the right and authority to destroy Messiah as He has the right and authority to destroy his mother and all those who are on the earth together without any distinction for Messiah over others. But if he is God how can he be destroyed? To say that Messiah is man rebuts their claim that he is God.

The words: *who then could control anything as against God*, are an allusion to show that there is no one at all who could stop God from doing anything He wished; otherwise, it would mean that God had no control on that thing. No cause in the universe has an independent control on its effect; nothing can stop or overwhelm the Divine control on anything; nobody owns anything except God alone who has no partner or colleague; when He makes us owner of a certain thing, His ownership and His authority on it continues as before.

Now, come the words, *if He wished to destroy the Messiah son of Mary and his mother and all those on the earth together?* The Messiah is qualified by the phrase "son of Mary" to show that he was a total man, and like other human beings was under the control of the Lord. For this very reason, "his mother" has been added in conjunction because both had the same

root and origin. Then, the clause: "and those on the earth together" was added because all are governed by the same law without any difference.

This qualification and conjunction clearly present the proof of Jesus's transience. The Messiah is like any other human being, and like all those on the earth he is subject to all the changes and variations which affect others, because all are similarly transient; if others can be destroyed by Divine order then Jesus too would be affected likewise. There is nothing to save him from it; if he were God he could not be destroyed.

The clause, *And God's is the Kingdom of the Heavens and the earth and what is between them*, gives the reason of the preceding statement. The Qur'an generally refers to the creation with the words: "the Heavens and the earth" but here the phrase: "and what is between them" has been added. The aim is to make the proof clearer; now no one can say that God has not mentioned what is between the heavens and the earth while the speech deals with Jesus who was between the heavens and earth. In this sentence, the predicate "and God's is" has been written before the subject, in this way it confines the Ownership to God, and the proof becomes more emphatic. The meaning will be: How can anyone stop God if He wished to destroy the Messiah and others when the Kingdom and unrestricted authority on the heavens, earth and what is between them is reserved for God and no one shares it with Him. Consequently, nobody can stop the implementation of God's order.

He creates what He pleases; and God has power over all things: These sentences in their turn explain the reason of the preceding sentence, that is: *and God's is the Kingdom of the heavens and the earth and what is between them*. The Kingdom—which is a sort of control and ownership—contains in its essential ingredients comprehensive power and effectual will; and such a Kingdom in the heavens, earth and what is between them is reserved for God. He has power over all things and He creates what He pleases. His creating what He pleases and having power on all things is the proof of His Kingdom; and His Kingdom proves that if He wished to destroy all, there is nobody to stop its implementation. Finally, it proves that no one is His partner in His Divinity.

To prove that His will is implemented and His power is comprehensive, it is enough to say that He is God. Perhaps, for this reason the Divine name, God, has been repeated several times. If He is God then nobody shares Godship with Him.

وَقَالَتِ الْيَهُودُ وَالنَّصَارَىٰ نَحْنُ أَبْنَاءُ اللَّهِ وَأَحِبَّاؤُهُ ۚ قُلْ فَلِمَ يُعَذِّبُكُمْ
بِذُنُوبِكُمْ ۖ بَلْ أَنْتُمْ بَشَرٌ مِمَّنْ خَلَقَ ۚ يَغْفِرُ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ وَيُعَذِّبُ مَنْ يَشَاءُ
ۚ وَلِلَّهِ مُلْكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا ۖ وَإِلَيْهِ الْمَصِيرُ ﴿١٨﴾

(5:18) ***And the Jews and the Christians say: "We are the sons of Allah and his beloved ones." Say: "Why does He then chastise you for your faults? Nay, you are men from among those whom He has created; He forgives whom He pleases and chastises whom He pleases;" and Allah's is the Kingdom of the heavens and the earth and what is between them, and to Him is the eventual return.***

Certainly, they did not claim real sonship as the Christians claim for the Messiah. Neither the Jewsnor the Christian put forward this claim in the literal sense. Theycalled themselves sons of God metaphorically, as a mark of distinction. In their scriptures, a lot of people have been called sons of God, for example, Adam[1], Jacob[2], David[3], Ephraim[4], Jesus[5], and good doing believers[6].

What they meant with this claim was that their relationship with God was like that of sons with their father. They thought themselves like the sons of a King who had special status in comparison to the subjects. They were nearer to God and God was not supposed to treat them as His other subjects. In a way, they were exempted from the laws and regulations which were revealed for the general public, because they had very close connection with the King and as such, He would not punish them like His other subjects, nor will He keep them standing like common people on the Day of Resurrection. He would not humiliate them like others. All of this was the result of their relationship with God that was a relation of love and honor.

This sonship created a special relationship with God, which brought

1 Luke, 3:38

2 Exodus, 4:22

3 Psalms, 2:7

4 Jeremiah, 31:9

5 Many places in the *New Testament*

6 Matthew, 5:9; and other Gospels.

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them very near to Him. The phrase: "His beloved ones" coming after the conjunction is an explicative apposition; it serves no real purpose. This claim of special relation and belovedness was meant to establish its inseparable attribute, that is, they can never be chastised and punished. They are assured of Divine favor and honor because if God were to punish them, it will go against the distinction and honor that He has reserved for them. The proof of the above interpretation is seen in the rebuttal of their claim where God says: *He forgives whom He pleases and chastises whom He pleases*. There was no reason to give this reply if they had not meant by their claim: "We are the sons of God and His beloved ones," that they cannot be punished at all even if they did not accept the call of truth. Also, there would be no meaning to the statement: *Nay you are men from among those whom He has created*. In short, when they said: "'We are the sons of God and His beloved ones' ," they wanted to say that they were the chosen people of God and His beloved ones and God was not going to give them punishment even if they did what they did or left what they left, because full security against every unpleasant result or situation was a concomitant of special relationship and love.

... Say: "Why does He then chastise you for your faults?": God tells His Prophet to refute their claim by bringing two proofs against them:

By contradicting their claim, pointing to the chastisements that were inflicted on them; and (2) Bringing a proof, which would oppose their claim. The sentence under discussion contains the first proof: "Say: 'Why does He chastise you for your faults?'" If you are right in your claim that you are the sons of God and His beloved ones, that you are safe from Divine punishment and in no way you can be chastised, then you should have been safe from every punishment of this world and the next. If so, then why are you constantly being punished for your sins and faults?

As for the Jews, they always committed major sins; they killed their prophets, they murdered their good people, they broke the Divine covenants which were taken from them, they altered the words from their places, they concealed the Divine communications and rejected them, they committed every type of transgression and contravention. Consequently, they always tasted the bitter results of their misdeeds; some were transformed into animals, others were thrown into disgrace and infelicity, unjust rulers were hoisted over them who killed them, disgraced them, and destroyed their towns and cities. Theirs is but a moribund life, they are neither alive nor dead.

As for the Christians, the sins and crimes that have taken root in their societies and nations are not less than those of the Jews; nor are the various types of chastisement meted out to them different from those of the Jews. Their condition was the same before coming of the Prophet, remained the same in his days and continues unchanged after him until now. History has recorded all this, even more than that; and the Qur'an also describes it to a certain extent, as may be seen in the chapters of "The Cow," "The House of ʿImrān," "Women," "The Table" and "The Battlements," etc.

They cannot say that these misfortunes, disasters and calamities that afflict them from time to time are in fact manifestations of Divine love towards them, which they do not emanate from Divine wrath and are not meant as punishment or chastisement. After all, similar misfortunes had come upon good servants of God, even His Prophets and Messengers like Abraham, Ishmael, Jacob, Joseph, Zachariah and John the Baptist and others like them; and you too, O Muslims! Have suffered such reversals of fortune as in the battle of Uhud and Mūtah, etc. How can you say that when these catastrophes come to us they are Divine punishment but when you are afflicted you count it as Divine favor?

Comment: There is no doubt that these physical troubles, worldly disasters and misfortunes afflict the believers and disbelievers alike, and they catch the good-doers and evil-doers in similar way. It is the Divine custom that covers all the servants of God since time immemorial. However, it is called with different names and brings about different effects depending on the goodness or wickedness of the men affected. In other words, we have to see what is the status of the servant *vis-à-vis* his Master.

There is no doubt that when the good traits are entrenched in a servant's psyche and the human excellence has fully covered his being (like the Prophets and their true followers), then the afflictions and worldly troubles which come to him, serve only to unveil his hidden virtues and merits which benefit not only him but even others. This type of afflictions, although they are disliked by human nature, are parts of spiritual training which God puts His good servants through; you may say that through these misfortunes God opens the way to raise their status and rank.

Then comes one whose felicity or infelicity has not taken root and after affliction with calamities and catastrophes, he did not find the way to felicity and happiness, then these trials and tribulations help in exposing his status of belief or disbelief, merit or demerit. The only name that can be given to such misfortunes is that they are tests and trials coming

from God, which open the way for the man to the paradise or the hell.

Lastly come those whose life is a permanent tale of base desires; they are depraved and corrupt and are intent on making others depraved and corrupt; they are submerged in the currents of desire and anger; if they get a chance, they would choose depravity over virtue and arrogance before their Creator instead of submitting to Him; as the Qur'an narrates the end results of the unjust nations like the people of Noah, ʿĀd, Thamūd, Pharaoh, the inhabitants of Midian and the people of Lot. Their bad end was the result of their arrogance against God. The calamities that were poured on them and which annihilated their whole nations have to be counted as Divine punishment, chastisement, and the evil consequences of their deeds. They cannot be explained in any other way.

God has combined these three groups in His noble speech: *... and We bring these days to men by turns, and that Allah may know those who believe and take witnesses from among you; and Allah loves not the unjust. And that Allah may purge those who believe and eradicate the unbelievers* (3:140–1).

The history of the Jews since the time Moses was raised amongst them until God raised Muḥammad, (more than 2000 years); and likewise, the history of the Christians since the day the Messiah was raised to heaven till the advent of Islam (nearly six centuries, as they say) are full of various types of sins they did and crimes they committed. There was hardly an evil they did not indulge in, they persisted in it and remained stubborn without any shame. In this back-drop, the only name that can be given to the calamities that afflicted them is chastisement, punishment, and retribution.

Of course, the Muslims too have suffered similar afflictions; those misfortunes (in their natural disposition) were such episodes, which the Divine management had brought on the Muslims. Such has been the course of God that has indeed run before: *... and you shall not find a change in Allah's course* (48:23). We have to look at the position of the affected Muslims to decide about those misfortunes; if they were steadfast on the path of truth then the misfortune was a trial and test given to them by God, and if they had deviated from the straight path, then certainly it was punishment and chastisement. No one has any badge of honor against God, nor can anyone arbitrarily claim any right on God. The Qur'an has never said that the Muslims had any special honor before God nor has it called them sons of God and His beloved ones. In fact, Qur'an doesn't care about the names and the titles, which people have taken for themselves.

God has addressed them in these words: *Do you think that you will enter the Garden while Allah has not yet known those who strive hard from among you, and (He has not) known the patient ... And Muḥammad is no more than a Messenger, the messengers have already passed away before him; if then he dies or is killed, will you turn back upon your heels? And whoever turns back upon his heels, he will by no means do harm to Allah in the least; and Allah will reward the grateful* (3:142–4). *(This) shall not be in accordance with your vain desires nor in accordance with the vain desires of the People of the Book; whoever does evil, he shall be requited with it, and besides Allah he will find for himself neither a guardian nor a helper* (4:123).

The phrase, *Why does He then chastise you for your faults?* may be taken to refer to the chastisement of the next world. In that case, it would be translated as a future tense and not as a present imperfect tense. The People of the Book accept that they could be punished a little for their faults. The Qur'an has quoted the Jews' claim that: *"Fire shall not touch us but for a few days"* (2:80); and although the Christians say that Messiah sacrificed himself to atone his followers' sins, but this claim in itself admits that they commit sins and that the resulting punishment was taken by Messiah upon himself in the form of crucifixion; in addition to that, the Gospels describe some sins like fornication, etc, and the Church in its turn was admitting it practically by issuing certificates of atonement. However, the earlier interpretation is more appropriate.

..."Nay, you are men from among those whom He has created; He forgives whom He pleases and chastises whom He pleases;" and Allah's is the Kingdom of the heavens and the earth and what is between them, and to Him is the eventual return: It is the second argument against their claim. It tells them that if we look into your reality it will show the falsity of your claim that you are the sons of God and His beloved ones; you are merely mortal human beings from among the creatures of God; you have no superiority in this matter over other creatures of God; whoever is in the heavens and earth and what is between them, his only distinction is that he is one of the creatures placed in the heavens and earth and between them. He is a creature of God, and God is the King who rules over him and about him as well as over others and about others as He wishes and anyhow He wishes; and that creature like other things is to return to his Lord who is the King and ruler over him and the others. Accordingly, it is on God's discretion to forgive whom He pleases or give punishment to whom He pleases; any distinction or nobility or other such things cannot

stop God from forgiving him or punishing him as He wishes. Nothing can block God's way and no shield can protect anyone from God's will.

The clause: *Nay, you are men from among those whom He has created*, is one premise of the argument; the second is: *and God's is the Kingdom of the heavens and the earth and what is between them*; and the end phrase: *and to Him is the eventual return*, is the third premise. The clause, *He forgives whom He pleases and chastises whom He pleases*, gives the result of the argument that refutes their claim that there was no way they could be punished.

يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ قَدْ جَاءَكُمْ رَسُولُنَا يُبَيِّنُ لَكُمْ عَلَىٰ فَتْرَةٍ مِنَ الرُّسُلِ أَنْ تَقُولُوا مَا جَاءَنَا مِنْ بَشِيرٍ وَلَا نَذِيرٍ ۖ فَقَدْ جَاءَكُمْ بَشِيرٌ وَنَذِيرٌ ۗ وَاللَّهُ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴿١٩﴾

(5:19) ***O People of the Book! Indeed Our Messenger has come to you explaining to you after a cessation of the Messengers, lest you say: "There came not to us a giver of good news or a warner," so indeed there has come to you a giver of good news and a warner; and Allah has power over all things.***

al-Rāghib has said:

> "*al-Futūr* is tranquillity after heat, softness after hardness and weakness after strength. God has said: *O People of the Book! Indeed Our Messenger has come to you explaining to you after a cessation of the Messengers*, that is, tranquillity and quiet during which no messenger of God came."

This verse is the second speech addressed to the People of the Book; and it completes the preceding speech. The first verse has explained to them that God has sent to them a Messenger who is supported by the manifest Book and he guides by God's permission to every good and happiness. Now, this verse explains that this Divine explanation is meant for completing the proof over them, lest they say: "there came not to us a giver of good news or a warner."

This description makes it clear that the clause related to the verb, "explaining to you"; in this verse is the same, which is mentioned, in the preceding verse. Thus, the full sentence will be: 'explaining to you much of what you concealed of the Book.' You should understand that this

religion to which you are invited is exactly the same which you believed in; it confirms what is with you; if there is any difference it is because it makes clear those religious realities which the Divine Books had explained and you had kept them hidden. It means that the speech: "O People of the Book! Indeed Our Messenger has come to you explaining to you," in a way repeats exactly the previous speech and the purpose is to add some more details which were not given before, and which are mentioned in the clause: "lest you say: 'There came not to us a giver of good news or a warner' ." Such repetition is allowed because there is a long gap between the two sentences and it is not unusual in literature.

There is another possibility that it is a completely new speech, and the related clauses of the verb: *making clear to you* are deleted. This deletion may allude to comprehensiveness that is, He makes clear to you all those things which require clarification. Or it may show eminence and magnificence of the matter, that is, makes clear to you a very important and great matter which you needed to know. The clause: "after a cessation of the Messengers" alludes to this need. The meaning then will be: makes clear to you all those things you needed to know because a long period has gone by without there being any messenger who could have explained to you. The words: "lest you say: 'There came not to us a giver of good news or a warner' " is connected with the verb: *indeed there has come to you*, showing the reason of his coming.

The sentence: "and God has power over all things," aims at replying to an unspoken objection. The Jews thought that no shariah was to come after the Torah because abrogation and *al-badā*ʾ were not possible. God refutes their assumption by saying that such thinking goes against the comprehensiveness and generality of Divine Power. We have described in detail about abrogation while writing on the verse 2:106 in the first volume of our book: *Whatever signs We abrogate or cause to be forgotten, We bring one better than it or like it.*

The Way of Thinking to which the Qur'an Guides[1]

No doubt, man's is a life of reflection that requires perception and

1 The author in this essay wants to prove the inevitability and reliability of logical proofs and rational arguments. Although he does not say so clearly, I think his main aim is to refute the Akhbārīs' views that rational precepts have no place in religion. They say that only the Qur'an and the Sunnah are the

discernment; we call it faculty of thought. So the life is built on thought. It follows that the more correct and comprehensive the thought is, the more appropriate and sound the life will be. Whatever system a man follows and whichever path he treads upon, his good life is linked to, and bound with, proper thought; as much share it takes from that thought, that much uprightness it enjoys.

God has repeatedly described it in His Great Book in different ways and various styles: *Is he who was dead then We raised him to life and made for him a light by which he walks among the people, like him whose likeness is that of one in utter darkness whence he cannot come forth?* (6:122). *Say: "Are those who know and those who do not know alike?"* (39:9). *Allah will exalt those of you who believe, and those who are given knowledge, in high degrees* (58:11). *therefore give good news to My servants, those who listen to the word, then follow the best of it, those are they whom Allah has guided and those it is who are the men of understanding* (39:17–18). There are many such verses, which there is no need to quote here. Nobody has any doubt how Qur'an invites people to the correct thinking and exhorts them to proceed on the path of knowledge.

Also the Qur'an reminds the readers that what it guides to is a way from among the ways of thinking. God says: *Surely this Qur'an guides to that which is most upright* (17:9); that is, the religion, custom, or path that is most upright. In any case, it is the path of life and its uprightness depends on the uprightness of the way of thinking, as God has said: *indeed, there has come to you a light and a clear Book from Allah; with it Allah guides him who follows His pleasure into the ways of peace and brings them out of utter darkness into light by His permission and guides them to the straight path* (5:15–16). The straight path is that clear path which is free from contradiction and conflicts, that is, neither it goes against the truth which one seeks nor its various sections point to different directions.

God, in His Mighty Book, has not pin-pointed the correct and upright thought to which He calls His servants; He has left it to the common sense of the people, expecting them to use their natural reasoning power and

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genuine sources of the shariah. However, a group of them says that the Qur'an should not be explained except according to the traditions narrated from a *ma'sūm*. This practically divests the Qur'an of its authority, transferring it to its explanatory traditions. For them all traditions in the four early collections are authentic and must be followed without any testing. (Trans.)

the perception engraved in their minds. If you minutely study the Divine Book and meditate upon its verses, you will probably find over three hundred verses which invite people to contemplate, remember or ponder; or they teach the Prophet an argument to prove a truth or negate a falsity; as for example: *Say: "Who then could control anything as against Allah if He wished to destroy the Messiah son of Mary and his mother ..."* (5:17). Of the same genre are those verses which describe the arguments and proofs used by His prophets and beloved ones like Noah, Abraham, Moses and other great prophets, in addition to Luqmān and the believer from the family of Fir'awn (Pharaoh) and others, peace of God be on them all. For example: *Their Messengers said: "Is there (any) doubt about Allah, the Maker of the heavens and the earth?"* (14:10). *And when Luqmān said to his son while he admonished him: "O my son! Do not associate aught with Allah; most surely polytheism is a grievous iniquity"* (31:13). *And a believing man of Fir'awn's people who hid his faith said: "What! Will you slay a man because he says: 'My Lord is Allah,' and indeed he has brought to you clear arguments from your Lord?"* (40:28). Also, He quotes the magicians of Pharaoh as saying: *They said: "We do not prefer you to what has come to us of clear arguments and to He Who made us, therefore decide what you are going to decide; you can only decide about this world's life; surely we believe in our Lord"* (20:72–73).

God has not ordered His servants even in a single verse of His Book that they should blindly believe in Him, or in things sent by Him; or that they should tread on a path without thinking. He has often hinted to the reasons because of which He has laid down certain regulations and commandments (where a man has no way of knowing their detailed causes) describing some things which could be used as arguments; as He says: ... *surely prayer keeps (one) away from indecency and evil, and certainly the remembrance of Allah is the greatest ...* (29:45). *O you who believe! Fasting has been prescribed for you, as it was prescribed for those before you, so that you may guard yourselves (against evil)* (2:183). *Allah does not desire to put on you any difficulty, but He wishes to purify you so that He may complete His favor on you, that you may be grateful* (5:6). There are many other verses of similar nature.

This thoughtful perception, that is the way of correct thinking which the Qur'an exhorts the human beings to use, on which it has based its call to truth, good or benefit or restrains from falsity, evil or harm—it is that perception which we know and recognise with our nature, which

doesn't change or alter, and about which no man disputes with others. If there appears some dispute or discord about it then it is like a dispute in self-evident principles; it happens only when one or the both parties do not understand the true meaning of the subject matter because of some miscomprehension.

You may ask what is this path, which we are supposed to know by our nature. There is no doubt that there are some solid realities which independently exist and do not depend on our actions, like the realities of the genesis of the world and its end or mathematical, physical or other such principles. When we want to understand these matters we refer to basic principles, which are self-evident and are not subject to any doubt. Also, we take help from other principles, which are intrinsically attached to those self-evident principles. Then we arrange them in a particular way until we get the desired result. For example we say:

> A is B, and every B is C; therefore A is C. Or, as we say:
> If A is B, then C is D; and if C is D, then G is H. Therefore if A is B then G is H.
> Or, as we say:
> If A is B, then C is D; and if C is D, then G is H. But A is not B. Therefore G is not H.

These patterns of logic and the principle matters described above are self-evident truths and no man of normal wisdom can have any doubt about them. If anybody doubts them, then it indicates some defect in his power of understanding, because of which it has failed to grasp these clear matters, as is generally seen about those who express doubts about self-evident truths.

If we look at the doubts or uncertainties expressed against this logical way of thinking, we will see that when they want to reach at a result in their claims and objectives they too use the same principles laid down in the logic in its form, pattern and material; if we analyze their speech to the elementary premises used in them, they will turn into logical forms and principles. If somebody changes those premises or the forms in a way that according to logical principles would not lead to any result, the whole speech would become devoid of meaning and you will see that they would not like it. This is a clear proof that these people according to their human nature do accept the correctness of these logical principles, they submit to it and use it; they refute it with their tongues but in their inner selves they believe in it.

As some *mutakallimūn* (experts of scholastic theology) have said: "If the logic were a way leading to the truth then there should not have been any discord among the scholars of logic; but we find them differing among themselves in their opinions."

Comment: This scholar has used hypothetical syllogism without realizing what he was doing. He doesn't realize that when we say that logic is the instrument that prevents man from falling into error, we mean that use of logic in proper way prevents man from falling into error. Nobody claims that everyone who uses logic uses it correctly. Sword is the instrument for cutting; but it will do its work only if it is used in proper way.

Some of them have said: "These principles of logic were developed gradually. How can the recognition of true realities depend on them? How can a man who doesn't know them or doesn't use them arrive at the real truth?"

Comment: This argument too like the preceding one is hypothetical syllogism. Moreover it is the worst type of sophistry. He has not understood the meaning of development. Development in this context refers to the detailed discovery of those principles which man is vaguely aware of by his nature; development doesn't mean invention.

Some have said: "These principles were propagated among the people in order to close the door of *Ahl al-Bayt*, or to divert the people from following the Book and the *Sunnah*. As such the Muslims must keep aloof from them."

Comment: If we analyze this speech it will result in some conjunctive or hypothetical syllogism. If a system is used for improper purpose it doesn't mean that the system in itself is not good and proper; it is like a sword, which is used to kill an innocent person or the religion, which is used for something other than the pleasure of God.

Some have said: "The intellectual reasoning often leads to what is clearly against the Book and the *Sunnah,* as we see in the opinions of many philosophers."

Comment: This too is a compound conjunctive syllogism. The mistake of the philosophers does not emanate from the form of syllogism or from a self-evident truth. It occurs because some wrong propositionis mixed with correct ones.

Some people have said: "The whole purpose of logic is to differentiate between a form that would lead to a correct conclusion from an unsound form; but as far as the matter is concerned, the logic doesn't have any law

which would prevent a man from falling into error about it. There is no assurance against committing mistakes in the matter except referring it to the *maʾsūmīn*. Therefore, the only safe way is to return to the *maʾsūmīn*."

Comment: The above argument is sophistic. The scholar wants to prove that *khabar al-wāhid*[1] or the collection of *akhbār al-āhād* combined with the apparent meanings of the Qur'an is *al-hujjah* (proof) of shariah. We know that we can hold fast to the *maʾsūmīn* only when me are sure that a *hadīth* has actually been uttered by them and also know what is the meaning of the speech. But such certainty is impossible concerning *akhbār al-āhād* because there is no more than a strong conjecture that the words were spoken by the *maʾsūm*, and the same is the case with its meaning. And this applies to all those proofs, which are based on strong conjectures. Holding fast to the *maʾsūmīn* admittedly depends on the certainty of matter and the certainty of matter may emanate from their words or from logical premises; and in any case, one has to be sure that the form of the argument is not faulty [and it leads us to logic].

They have said that in view of all these doubts, the rational arguments cannot give us any certainty regarding the subject matter.

Comment: First of all, it is just an overbearing obstinacy. Secondly, this speech in itself is a rational argument from which he wants to reach to a definite conclusion and even its form is based on logic.

Some have said: "All that is needed by human beings is placed in the Mighty Book and stored in the traditions of the *maʾsūmīn*. Therefore, why should we resort to the left overs of the unbelievers and atheists?"

Comment: The need of rational and logical arguments is the same, which we observe in this objection itself, because he has composed a logical conjunctive syllogism and has used in it the materials that are admittedly correct. Yet, he has fallen victim of sophistry in two places.

Firstly, he did not realize that these logical principles themselves are a part of what is stored in the Book and the *Sunnah* and one cannot go to its depth without independent research.

Secondly, it is one thing to say that the Book and the *Sunnah* do not need any addenda or appendix for making their meaning clear and quite another to say that those who hold fast to the Book and the *Sunnah* also

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1 *Khabar al-wāhid* (plural: *akhbār al-āhād*:): Literally, a tradition narrated by one person; actually the term refers to a tradition, which is not *mutawātir*, even if many narrators narrated it. (Trans.)

do not need any additional help in reaching at the correct conclusion. What will they say if a medical doctor who makes research about the human body were to claim that he did not need to study any scientific, social, or literary subject, because all are related to human beings. Or, if an ignorant person refused to learn any knowledge claiming that all types of knowledge are found in the human nature. These friends of ours are not different from them.

Thirdly, the Book and the *Sunnah* themselves invite the people to widely use the correct logical and rational arguments. (Such arguments are the self-evident premises or those depending on the self-evident propositions.) God says: *therefore give good news to My servants, those who listen to the word, then follow the best of it; those are they whom Allah has guided, and those it is who are men of understanding* (39:17–18). There are many other such verses and traditions. Of course, the Book and the *Sunnah* forbid us to follow what clearly goes against them. The Book and the definitely proved *Sunnah* are the things whose veracity and truth has been clearly proved by reason; and it is impossible that the same reason should prove invalidity of what it has definitely proved to be valid earlier. Admittedly, we have to distinguish true rational premises from the false ones, in order that we may hold fast to the correct premises, in the same way, as we have to distinguish the decisive verses and traditions from the ambiguous ones in order that we may hold fast to the decisive ones. The same is the case of the traditions where we have to distinguish those traditions, which have surely emanated from the *maʾsūmīn* from the forged and fraudulent ones; and how great their number is!

Fourthly, the truth is truth wherever it is found and however it is found. Its truth is not affected by the belief or disbelief of its conveyor nor his piety or sinfulness makes it tainted. To refuse to accept a truth just because of hatred of its conveyor is nothing but the prejudice of ignorance, which has been condemned by God in His Book and through the words of His Messengers.

Some have said: "The way of precaution in religion which is preferred in the Book and the *Sunnah* is to restrict oneself to the apparent meanings of the Book and the *Sunnah* and to keep aloof from using logical and rational principles, because there is a danger of their pushing one into eternal perdition from which one could never get out."

Comment: The objector has in this very statement used the logical and rational principles as it contains exceptive syllogism based on rational

premises that are acceptable by reason although they are not based on the Book or the *Sunnah*. However, the risk he mentions might involve those who don't have ability to understand deep rational propositions. But as for those capable persons who have such discernment, there is no proof from the Book, the *Sunnah*, or reason to show that they cannot understand the realities of the deep knowledge. We know that man can have no nobility or greatness except with such understanding and the Book, the *Sunnah* and the reason all prove it.

Some people have said: "The way of our noble predecessors was totally different from the way of the philosophy and *ʿirfān*. They used the Book and the *Sunnah* and had no need to use the logical and rational principles like the philosophers, or to use the ways of spiritual regimen like the Sūfīs. When the Greek philosophy was rendered into Arabic in the days of the caliphs, the Muslim *mutakallimūn* (scholastic theologians) who themselves were among the followers of the Qur'an decided to fit the philosophical ideas on the Qur'anic realities. As a result, they were divided into two sects, the Ashʾarites and the Muʾtazilites. Then, during the same period appeared another group who were called Sūfīs and ʿārifs. They claimed that the secrets were open to them and they knew in depth the Qur'anic realities. They thought that they had no need to return to the *maʾsūmīn*. In this way, they separated from the Shīʾahs who held fast to *Ahl al-Bayt*; things continued like this until about the middle of the thirteenth century of Hijrah (about a 100 years ago). Then these people (the philosophers and the Sūfīs) began forgery and deception; they reinterpreted the themes of the Qur'an and *Hadīth* to make them conform to the ideas of philosophy and *tasawwuf*. They used this method so extensively that the majority of the Shīʾahs were confused."

He has inferred from the above statement that these principles go against the correct way to which the Book and the *Sunnah* guide the people. Then he has mentioned some objections against the logic. For example, the existence of discord among the logicians themselves, and the fact that one is not always safe from errors in spite of using logical formulae and the fact that we do not find a sufficient number of self-evident truths or free from doubt realities which could serve in leading us to the deep realities. Then he has mentioned many themes of philosophy that according to him go clearly against the principles inferred from the Book and the *Sunnah*.

This is the gist of his writing, which we have given in brief.

Comment: would that I knew which aspect of these lengthy ramblings can be mended and corrected, because the disease has passed the stage of treatment. What he has said about the history of the *mutakallimūn* and their going against the *aimmah* of *Ahl al-Bayt*—that they wanted to fit the philosophy on the Qur'an which supposedly divided them into two sects of Ashʾarites and Muʾtazilites; then the appearance of the Sūfīs and their presumption that they and their followers had no need of the Book and the *Sunnah*; that the things continued like that until the thirteenth century of Hijrah when the philosophy or *ʿirfān* came into being—all these are totally against the known definite history and we shall briefly refer to all of this later on.

Apart from that, he has committed a great blunder by mixing *al-kalām* (scholastic theology) with philosophy. The philosophy deals with phenomenal things and matters (which are found in reality) and offers proof for accepted issues and problems through such premises, which are free from doubt. Scholastic theology, on the other hand, deals with matters that may be real and objective or subjective (mentally posited), and it offers proof for issues and problems through such premises, which could be based on reality or on subjective consideration. Obviously, these two fields of knowledge are far removed from one another. How can it be thought that the *mutakallimūn* would endeavour to make philosophy conform to the Qur'an? It is common knowledge that the *mutakallimūn* from their very beginning until now had remained in conflict and dispute with the philosophers and *al-ʿurafāʾ* (here this word has been used for the Sūfīs). Their books and writings which are in our hands and the reports of their debates and polemical argumentations which have come to us are the best witness to prove it.

Probably, his talk was based on the writings of some orientalists who claim that it was the transference of Greek philosophy to Islam, which caused the appearance of *ʿilm al-kalām* (scholastic theology) among the Muslims. This man did not know the meaning of *al-kalām* or philosophy, nor was he aware of the aims and objectives of the two fields of knowledge. He was also unaware of the factors that led to the appearance of scholastic theology in Islam. He just shot his arrows in the dark.

Even more amusing is his assertion where he describes the difference between *al-kalām* and philosophy. He says: "The scholastic theology aims at attesting to the topics of genesis and resurrection keeping in view the aspects of religion; while philosophical discussions talk about the same

topics without paying any attention to religious dictates." Then he has used this supposed difference to claim that the way of logical and rational principles is totally different from the way of religion, and goes against the path laid down by the shariah. He has confounded the confusion. Every knowledgeable scholar knows that the group which has mentioned this difference between these two disciplines wants to indicate that the syllogisms used in theological discussions are dialectical and composed of uncontestable premises (the well known undisputable ones), because such arguments lead to undisputed realities; as for the philosophical discussions, some of them are composed of argumentative syllogisms which aim to prove what is truth, not what is universally accepted. In the light of the above, how can it be taken to mean that the way of scholastic theology is the way of religion and the way of philosophy goes against religion and that it should be discarded even if it is true?

As for his objections against logic, philosophy and ʿ*irfān*, we have already commented on his objections against logic. What he has written concerning philosophy and ʿ*irfān*, if it is correct quotation and he has correctly understood its meaning that it goes against the clear dictates of the true religion, then nobody doubts that it is invalid and it is among the erroneous ideas of philosophers or those who tread on the path of ʿ*irfān;* but such errors should be put in the account of those people who have expressed those ideas, and should not be used against philosophy or ʿ*irfān* as a discipline; it would be merely the defect and deficiency of the scholars concerned.

It was incumbent on him to ponder on the disputes that have grown between various groups of scholastic theologians—Ashʾarites, Muʾtazilites and Shīʾites. These differences have divided the single Islamic *ummah* into 73 sects, then every sect has branched into various sub-sects, and these subdivisions might be equal in number to the main divisions. He should have thought what was the root cause of these differences. Was it not because of following the path of religion itself? Does any research scholar have a right to present these differences to prove that religion is null and void and its way is incorrect? Can any explanation be given for this phenomenon that could not be applied with equal force to logic and philosophy? Can the logicians and philosophers be accused of an inner deficiency that could not be found in the people of religion?

Similar to the scholastic theology is the case of Islamic jurisprudence. How many sects have developed even within a single sect; how much

discords and differences are found among their various *fuqahāʾ*? The same is the case of all numerous disciplines and arts as none of them is immune from differences.

All this long talk has led him to declare that all the ways used for argumentation are null and void and the only correct path is that of the Book and the *Sunnah* that is the path of religion. In short, the only way left to him is that of *tadhakkur* (remembrance). It is a theory attributed to Plato; he says that if man frees himself from lustful mentality, acquires piety and spiritual perfection, and then turns to his inner self, he may reach at the truth.

This explanation is offered of the said Platonic theory. Some ancient Greek and other philosophers had adopted it. Some Muslims and some other occidental philosophers accepted this view too. However, every group has affirmed it in a different way.

Some assert that human knowledge is but natural; it is there, present with him actually from the first instant of his existence; as such, when we say that a new knowledge has come to Zayd, it in effect means that he has remembered it.

Some others say that when man turns to his soul by isolating himself from material distractions, it causes discovery of realities—it does not mean that knowledge is present with him actually; rather it is with him potentially. Actuality of knowledge is found in the inner human soul—it separates from him when he is heedless, connects with him when he remembers. This view is held by the Illuminists and those cognizant with divine knowledge (implying here the Sūfīs), and their likes from all religions and creeds.

Another group offers the same explanation as the second above, but have added to it the condition of piety and adherence to the shariah in knowledge and practice. It has been asserted by some of our contemporary Muslims and others, as they think that this condition of adherence to the shariah would separate them from the Sūfīs and *ʿurafāʾ* (those cognizant with divine knowledge). But they are oblivious of the fact that the Sūfīs and *ʿurafāʾ* have already put that condition in their explanations, as evidenced by their reliable books, which are commonly available. So, this view is the same as the one held by the Sūfīs; yet the one differs from the other in the manner of "following" and the exact identification of its meaning. They believe that "following" should inflexibly concentrate on the apparent meanings of the Qur'an and the *Sunnah*. Their method is a

mixture of those of the Sūfīs and the Akhbārīs.

If this theory of remembrance is not intended to invalidate reference to logic and rational principles, then it may be deemed correct to a certain extent. When man is created in his essence, he has perception of his person and is cognizant of his personal powers and weaknesses; this cognition is naturally present with him, and it turns to acquired knowledge under influence of some of his faculties. Every faculty is bound to remain active within its sphere. It is inferred from the above that man, from the first moment of his existence, has some knowledge—that knowledge, although behind in nature, is concurrent with him in time. Also, nobody can deny that man gets some knowledge when he isolates himself somewhat from material connections.

But if the theory of remembrance is meant to invalidate reference to logic and rational principles, in other words, if it means that turning to oneself by isolating from external distraction frees one from the need of arranging academic premises for arriving at the results, then this view is most absurd, unworthy of slightest consideration. There are many reasons, which negate this view:

First: Deep research in human fields of knowledge and cognition, shows that man's declarative knowledge depends on his knowledge of the ideas of subject and predicate separately; and his ideas are confined to, or abstracted from the knowledge of items perceived by one of the five senses. Analogy and experiments have shown that if a man lacks one of the senses, he remains totally oblivious of all knowledge that depends on that sense—be it ideal or assertive, self-evident or requiring analogical set-up. If the knowledge were actually present with human nature and essence, lack of a sense would not have any adverse effect on that knowledge. If it were said that blindness or deafness obstructed that remembrance, it would contradict the basic theory that remembrance—turning to oneself by discarding material connections—helps in this process by removing the obliviousness.

Second: So far as this remembrance is concerned, only some human beings are blessed with it. As for the general humanity, they achieve their goals of life by combining various premises and deriving the results; they derive in this way thousands and thousands of correct results. This method pervades all fields of knowledge and technical skills. To deny this fact would be haughtiness, and to explain it as a chance would be rashness. To follow this method is but natural for the human beings; and when a

species is equipped with a natural and creative apparatus, it is bound to succeed in its endeavours, it is impossible for it to stumble in its actions.

Third: If we analyze the results of this "remembrance" we find that it is made up of well-arranged logical premises—disturb any laid down procedure in its form or substance and you disturb the result. So, they do use the logical principle—without knowing what they were doing. The hypothesis of chance and concurrence cannot be applied here. If they want to prove their theory of remembrance, they should bring an academic form based on it, which should have no connection with logic and its principles.

Now, let us look at the view that remembrance frees man from the need of referring to logical principles. It implies that there are two ways: the way of logic and the way of remembrance by following the shariah; that both of these ways lead to the correct destination, but the way of remembrance is better and preferable, because it is sure to hit the mark by conforming to the *maʾsūmʾs* views; while there is the risk of falling into error, always or mostly, in the way of logic and intellect.

In any case, the second objection to the previous view applies here too. Only a few persons can comprehend all objectives of the Book and the *Sunnah* with their mysteries and secrets that have such astonishing wide range. Those precious few persons are those who deeply meditate on religious gnosis with its astonishing inter-connectedness and intertwining roots and branches; some aspects of which are related to belief, others to personal and social activities. Man cannot be asked to perform something beyond his ability and power, neither in creation nor in legislation. People are only required to understand the objectives of religion through normal methods that they use in their lives. That is, arranging the known premises for discovering the unknown. And we know that only some premises of shariah are known which have been established by proofs. It is amusing to note that a proponent of remembrance has used this very argument against logic and philosophy. He says that even if we accept for the sake of argument that it was possible to know the actual realities by using the logic and philosophy, only such stalwarts of philosophy like Aristotle and Avicenna could achieve it; general public could not do it. Therefore, how can the Lawgiver order people to use logical and philosophical principles to discover the realities?

That man did not realize that the tables could be turned on him and the same question asked from him. If he says, that use of remembrance

is within reach of everybody according to the degree of his following of the shariah, we shall reply that the use of logic, a little or a lot, is within reach of every body according to his ability of finding the realities—it is not necessary for every one to reach the furthest limit, even if it is beyond his strength.

Secondly, the third objection, mentioned earlier, is applicable here too. These people use the methods of logic in all their arguments they put forward in the name of remembrance. They could not discard those logical methods even when trying to negate the same way of logic and establish the way of remembrance. And this is enough to show its incorrectness.

Thirdly, even those who follow the way of remembrance fall mostly in error. Remembrance, as they claim, was the way used by our good predecessors—and not the way of logic. Yet they were involved in a lot of controversies and differences among themselves, like a number of the companions of the Prophet who are regarded by the Muslims to be perfect in knowledge and adherence to the Book and the *Sunnah*; or whose knowledge and probity are agreed upon by the majority; and like many companions of the Imams of the same calibre, like Abū Hamzah, Zurārah, Abān, Abū Khālid, Hishām b. al-Hakam, Hishām b. Sālim, Muʾmin al-Tāq, the two Safwāns and others. Their basic differences with each other are well known. Clearly, when two persons differ on a subject, only one will be on the right. The same is the case with ancient jurisprudents and *muhaddithīn* like al-Kulaynī, al-Sadūq, al-Tūsī, al-Mufīd, al-Murtadā, and others (may God be pleased with them all). So what is the advantage of remembrance over logical consideration? They must search for some factor other than remembrance to distinguish between right and wrong. The only resort is the logical contemplation.

Fourthly: The gist of their argument is that man by adhering to the sinless personalities saves himself from falling into error. It is becausethe views of a sinless personality when heard from him properly and when his meaning is perfectly understood are safe from error. This much is accepted by all. Yet the fact is that what is definitely heard or taken from a *maʾsūm*, has nothing to do with remembrance or intellectual consideration at all; rather its syllogism runs as follows: It is the opinion of a *maʾsūm*; and all his opinions are right; therefore it is right. It is a proof that produces definite result.

On the contrary, what is understood from a tradition narrated by one narrator or other such things which produce only presumption, it

has no authority; there is no proof that such solitary traditions have any validity—except in the field of *fiqh*—unless it is in conformity with the Qur'an; nor does presumption lead anywhere when its opposite is proved by academic proofs.

Some people have said: "God has spoken to us in the Qur'an in the language with which we are familiar, with arrangements of words and phrases known to the speakers of this language. The apparent statements contain order and prohibition, promise and threat, stories and wisdom, sermon and arguments in a good manner. For understanding them, one is not obliged to learn logic, philosophy, and other such legacies of unbelievers, polytheists, and unjust persons. God has forbidden us to befriend them, incline towards them, or follow their paths. The proper way for one who believes in God and His Messenger is to adhere to the apparent meanings of religious statements, and stop at what a normal intellect understands from those words, without interpreting or overstepping them. This view is held by al-Hashawiyyah those who believe in literal meanings of traditions), al-Mushabbihah (those who think that the person of God is similar to that of humans), and other traditionalists."

This view is wrong both in form and in substance. As for the form, this argument uses the principles of logic at the same time when it wants to ban its use! Nobody says that the Qur'an leads to the use of the logical principles and that it was incumbent on every Muslim to learn logic. Yet its use is unavoidable in daily life. The opponents of logic are not unlike a person who says: The objective of the Qur'an is to lead us to the goals of religion, as such we are not obliged to learn the Arabic language which is a legacy of the people of Ignorance! Obviously, this assertion has no legs to stand upon, because language is the way man is naturally obliged to use in conversation, and that is why God has used it in His Book and the Prophet in his traditions. Likewise, logic is a mental way, which man is naturally obliged to tread in the sphere of understanding, and God has used it in His Book and the Prophet in his traditions.

Coming to the substance of that view, it takes intellectual substance but falls into fallacy by equalizing the apparent meaning with its application. A Muslim is required to understand from the Qur'anic words, like knowledge, power, life, hearing, sight, speech, volition and will the meanings that are opposite of ignorance, inability, death, deafness and blindness, etc. But he is not supposed to assert that God has a knowledge like our knowledge, power and life like our power and life, and hearing,

sight, volition and will like those of ours; he is not allowed to say so by the Book, the *Sunnah* or the reason. We have explained this topic to a certain extent under the discussion of the Decisive and Ambiguous verses in the third volume of this book.[1]

Some others have said: "The only evidence for the validity of the premises which are proved by rational arguments is the rational premise which says that reason's dictates must be followed. In other words, there is no authority for the reason's dictates except the reason itself. And it is clearly a vicious circle. Therefore, there is no escape in controversial issues except to the opinion of a *maʾsūm*—the Prophet or Imam—without following [a non-*maʾsūm*]."

But it is a most absurd doubt expressed on this matter. The man wanted to strengthen a structure, but it has led to its demolition. He has invalidated the rational dictate by what he has described as clear vicious circle. Then when he turned to authenticating the shariah's orders he was obliged to argue through rational arguments (which led to a vicious circle), or through shariah's dictate (which led to another vicious circle.) Now, he is disconcerted and confused between two vicious circles. Or he may opt to follow a non-*maʾsūm*, which will be a second confusion.

He has fallen into confusion when trying to understand the meaning of 'Obligatoriness of following the reason's dictate.' If this obligatoriness refers to what stands with prohibition and permission as a copartner, and whose contravention entails condemnation or punishment (like obligatoriness of obeying a good counsellor, and obligatoriness of justice in deciding the cases and other similar things), then it is the dictate of practical intellect, and we have nothing to say against it. And if it means that man is necessarily bound to confirm and accept a result—when arguments are offered for it with academic premises and in correct form with perfect conception of all aspects of related issues, then it is a proposition which man sees by his psychic forces. In this case, why should the intellect be asked for an evidence to prove the authenticity of its proof? Because its authenticity is self-evident; and this case is like other self-evident propositions. Every self-evident clause is its own proof; it needs no outside proof.

Some have said: "The ultimate goal of logic is to get at the established quiddities of things to arrive at the results through firm and established general premises. But academic researches have established today that

1 *al-Mīzān* (Eng.), vol. 5. (Trans.)

there is no totality, generality, permanency, or durability—neither in mind nor outside it. The things are governed by the law of general transformation; nothing continues as it is, in an established, permanent, or total condition."

This assertion is totally wrong. The man has used the principles of logic; in form and substance both, [to argue against the same principles] as any contemplating person will understand. Moreover, the objector has offered this objection only to prove that the old [Aristotlian] logic was not correct; yet it is a result, which is general, enduring and established which contains established concepts. Otherwise, it would not serve his purpose. So, the objection invalidates itself.

Perhaps we have gone beyond the self-imposed condition to keep the book as brief as possible. So, let us return to our previous topic.

The noble Qur'an guides the intellect to use what it has been created to use, and to precede on what it knows and is familiar with—that is, to arrange the known premises for arriving at the results, which were hitherto unknown. The intellect has a natural disposition for using authentic and indisputable premises in order to arrive at genuine and authentic results—and it is what is called "Proof." Also, the intellect is used in practical matters which lead to felicity and infelicity, good and evil, benefit and harm; showing what should be taken and adopted and what is to be rejected and discarded—these are mentally posited ideas, well-known or accepted premises—and it is what is called "Debate" or "Disputation." Alternatively, it uses in matters of assumed good or evil assumed premises, which guide to presumed good or prevent from presumed evil—and it is called "Admonition." God says: *Call to the way of thy Lord with wisdom and goodly exhortation, and have disputation with them in the best manner* (16:125). Clearly, "wisdom" refers to "proof," as may be understood from its positioning *vis-à-vis* goodly exhortation and disputation.

Question: The way of logical thinking and contemplation is within the ability of believer and unbeliever both, and human beings whether sinner or pious tread on it. In this background, how can you justify the Qur'anic statements where God disallows good knowledge and correct remembrance to all who are not pious and do not follow true religion; as is seen in the following verses: *... and none minds but he who turns (to Him) again and again* (40:13). *... and whoever fears Allah, He will make for him an outlet* (65:2). *Therefore turn aside from him who turns his back upon Our reminder and does not desire anything but this world's life. That is the*

(last) reach of their knowledge; surely your Lord knows best him who goes astray from His path and He knows best him who follows the right direction. (53:29–30). And how will you explain the numerous, nearly *mutawātir* traditions which say that beneficial knowledge cannot be attained except through good deeds?

Reply: There is no doubt that the Book and the *Sunnah* give importance to piety in respect of knowledge. But it does not mean that they have made piety (or piety coupled with remembrance) an independent way for acquiring knowledge of realities, separate from the natural way of contemplation which man inevitably treads upon. Otherwise, all the arguments and disputations brought in the noble Book against the unbelievers, polytheists, and immoral and sinful persons would become irrelevant—they do not follow the truth and do not know what piety and remembrance was; accordingly, they would be unable to attain the intended goal. Consequently, it would be irrelevant to argue with them. The same applies to the disputations found in the *sunnah* against various sects and groups that have gone astray.

In fact, piety is considered necessary for bringing the human intelligent soul back to its natural uprightness. It may be explained as follows:

Man, on his body's side, is made up of contrary animalistic and predatory powers, all related to this material body; each of these powers performs its own function without having any coordination with other powers. The desire of food, for instance, encourages man to go on eating and drinking; it feels no restriction or limitation by itself, except if stomach refuses to accept any more food or drink when it is filled up completely, or if the jaws become tired of chewing, or things like that. These are the things we always observe in ourselves

In this situation, if man inclines towards one of his powers, follows its dictates and proceeds to where it instigates him to go, that power exceeds its limits, and subjugates the opposite power to such an extent that it is almost negated. For example, giving free rein to desire of food or sex diverts the man away from all important affairs of life, like earning livelihood, social relations, domestic affairs, upbringing of children and all other individual and social responsibilities which he is obliged to do. The same thing happens when man goes on following other powers of desire and anger. This too we always see in our own lives as well as in others'.

With this excess and shortcoming, humanity is bound to perish. Man is a person who is controlled by these adverse powers; he is supposed to

pull all these powers together by activating them in the way of his felicity in the life of this world and the next. Such life has to be based on knowledge and perfection. He has no option but to give every power its due share in a way that it does not obstruct other powers, nor does it become dormant itself.

Man cannot perfect his humanity unless he creates a perfect balance between his various powers in such a manner that every power keeps in the middle of the way prescribed for it. The top characteristic of proper proportion in these powers is called wisdom, bravery, chastity, etc., and collectively they are called justice, probity.

No doubt, man acquires the thoughts (which are present with him now), and expands his human cognizance and knowledge by instigating these perceptive faculties to do their work. I mean, initially man comes into this world without any of these vast informations and knowledge; he is totally empty handed. Then his internal faculties perceive their requirements and demand from him what they desire. These elementary perceptions are the starting point of man's knowledge. Thereafter he goes on generalizing, particularizing, mixing and separating these matters until he completes the process of human thoughts.

A wise person will understand from the above description that if man remains deeply involved in obeying one of his various contradictory powers, and exceeds the limit in giving it what it demands, then his thoughts and perceptions would be deviated from right path; he would blindly make its propositions superior and keep other powers' propositions and thoughts subservient to it; he will remain oblivious to the demands of other faculties and powers.

Experience confirms it. It is this deviation, which we observe in intemperate and extravagant persons who have become slaves of their desires. Also it may be seen in unjust, oppressive tyrants who corrupt the life in human society. The former who are submerged in the abyss of desires and are obsessed by pleasures of drinking, entertainment and sexual enjoyments, are almost incapable of thinking about the obligations of humanity and the important matters for which great people vie with each other. Desire has permeated their sitting and standing, their joining and separating and things like that. The later, that is the oppressive and haughty people, are hard-hearted; incapable of thinking about compassion, kindliness, mercy, or humility even where it is essential. Their lives are mirrors of their evil condition which they display in all its manifestations—their

talk and silence, their looking and averting of eyes, their advancing and retreating, all are devoid of kindliness. Both groups are proceeding on a wrong path in seeking the knowledge; all are bent upon the perverted and deviated knowledge and thoughts connected with their twisted psyche. They are unaware of what lies beyond their myopic vision. And what lies there? It is beneficial knowledge and true cognizance. Man cannot attain true cognizance and beneficial knowledge unless his morals are excellent and his human virtues are complete. And this is piety, God-fearing.

It is thus proved that it is the good deeds, which preserve the good characteristics, which in their turn preserve the true cognizance, beneficial knowledge, and correct thoughts. There is no good in knowledge if it is devoid of practice.

Although we have explained this topic in academic and ethical terms (because the context demanded it), God has told all this in one short phrase, where He says: *And pursue the right course in your going about ...* (31:19). It is an indication that one should keep on the middle of the path, and remain moderate in life. Also He says: *If you fear Allah, He will grant you a distinction ...* (8:29). *... and make provision, for surely the best provision is piety (guarding oneself against evil); and fear Me, O people of understanding!* (2:197); that is, being men of understanding, you require piety and God-fearing for activating your understanding. Again God says: *And (I swear by) the soul and Him Who made it perfect, then He inspired it to understand what is wrong for it and right for it; He will indeed be successful who purifies it, and he will indeed fail who corrupts it* (91:7–10). Also He says: *... and fear Allah, that you may be successful* (3:130).

On the other hand, He says about the opposite group: *But there followed after them an evil generation, who neglected prayer and followed the sensual desires, so they shall soon meet (the result of their) sin; except such as repent and believe and do good ...* (19:59–60).

God states here that following the sensual desire leads to perdition. Also He says: *I will turn away from My signs those who are unjustly proud in the earth; and if they see every sign they will not believe in it; and if they see the way of rectitude they do not take it for a way, and if they see the way of error, they take it for a way; this is because they rejected Our signs and were heedless of them.* (7:146). Here God reminds that the prisoners of the powers of anger are prevented from following the way of truth and are pulled to the path of error and perdition, then He explains that it all happens because they are heedless of truth. Again He says: *And certainly We*

have created for hell many of the jinn and the men; they have hearts with which they do not understand, and they have eyes with which they do not see, and they have ears with which they do not hear; they are as cattle, nay, they are in worse errors; these are the heedless ones (7:179). In this verse, He states that these heedless ones are oblivious of the true perceptions, which behove human beings. Their hearts, eyes, and ears do not perceive what a blissful man perceives. Their perception does not reach higher than the level of cattle or even worse—and these are the ideas which grazing cattle and preying beasts are familiar with and inclined to.

The foregoing details clearly show that the Qur'an has made thought, remembrance and understanding conditional upon piety (God-fearing), and has joined knowledge with practice in order that man may attain to straight thinking and correct knowledge which is free from animalistic imaginations and Satanic insinuations.

Of course, there is a Qur'anic reality which cannot be denied; and that is: If man is brought under the influence of divine guardianship and goes near the perimeter of heavenly sanctity, it opens for him a door to the kingdoms of the heavens and the earth, and he sees through it what remains hidden to others—the great signs of God and everlasting lights of His omnipotence. al-Ṣādiq has said, "If the Satans had not hovered around the hearts of the human beings, they would have seen the kingdoms of the heavens and the earth." The Sunnīs have narrated from the Prophet that he said: "If there were no multiplicity in your talk and confusion in your hearts, you would have seen what I see, and heard what I hear." God has said: *And (as for) those who strive hard for Us, We will most certainly guide them onto Our ways; and Allah is most surely with the doers of good* (29:69). The apparent meaning of the following divine words prove it: *And worship thy Lord until there comes to thee that which is certain* (15:99), as it shows that certainty springs from worship. Also He says: *And thus did We show Abraham the kingdoms of the heavens and the earth, and so that he might be of those who are sure* (6:75), as it ties the virtue of certitude to observation of the kingdom. In other verses He says: *Nay! If you had known with a knowledge of certainty, you should most certainly have seen the hell; then you shall most certainly see it with the eye of certainty* (102:5–7) *Nay! Most surely the record of the righteous shall be in the ʿilliyyīn. And what will make you know what the ʿilliyyīn is? It is a written book; those who are drawn near (to Allah) shall witness it* (83:18–21). (A full discussion of this subject will be found in Chapter 5, verses 55 and 105.)

Affirmation of this reality does not go against our earlier stand that the noble Qur'an supports the way of natural thinking, on which the structure of human life is founded and man has been created. Because this way is other than meditation and contemplation; it is a divine gift, which is reserved for His selected servants; and the good end is for the pious ones.

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A Historical Discussion

In this discussion we shall have an overall view of the history of Islamic thoughts, and the way, which the Muslim *ummah* adopted—in spite of its sectarian differences. We do not intend to support or oppose any school of thought. Our aim is to present the historical events to the Qur'an and let the Holy Book confirm or reject them. We are not concerned with the boasting of supporters or apologia of opponents, because the place for it is in a religious discussion.

The noble Qur'an deals with all aspects of human life without being restricted with any condition. It governs man—be he an individual or a group, small or big, male or female, be he of white race or black, an Arab or non-Arab, civilized or primitive, learned or ignorant, present or absent; be he at any time and in any place. The Qur'an certainly guides him in all his affairs, be it belief, ethics or deeds.

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The Qur'an interlocks with all academic and industrial aspects related to the human life. Ponder on its verses exhorting people to meditate, think, remember and understand, and you will find that the Book intensely urges man to acquire knowledge and discard ignorance in every field, be it concerned with heavens or earth, whether it is vegetable world, animal kingdom or humanity as parts of this world of ours; and even going beyond that to the angels, devils, the tablet and the pen, etc., in order that it may be a means to acquire gnosis of God and whatever is in any way related to the social human life—ethics, laws, reciprocal rights and social norms.

You have seen that the Qur'an supports the natural way of thinking, to which the nature inevitably invites; there is no escape from it as the nature demands to proceed in logical way.

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The Qur'an itself uses all types of logical techniques—proof, argumentation, and sermon. It invites the Muslim *ummah* to follow its lead and to offer proofs regarding positivistic realities (in practical sphere); and to argue with the help of accepted premises in other spheres as in mentally posited considerations.

The Qur'an has offered the Prophetic way of life as its ideal; it has

appointed the Messenger of God as its model; the Muslims used to observe and remember his ways, and follow his knowledgeable steps as a student follows his teacher in his academic progress.

The Muslims during the Prophet's time (that is, during his stay at Medina) were new to the Islamic teachings. Their condition was not different from the ancient man in academic and industrial field. When they engaged in academic discussion, it was in a simple and non-technical manner, their only aim being to know divine commandments. In the beginning their attention was fixed on memorizing and recital of Qur'an, and memorizing the Prophetic traditions (without writing them) and their transmission. Sometimes they disputed with each other on religious topics; also they entered into arguments with people of some alien faith, especially the Jews and the Christians, because there were some groups of them in Arabia, Ethiopia and Syria. This was the beginning of *ʿilm al-kalām* (Scholastic Theology). They also liked narrating poetry; it was a part of Arabian culture, which Islam did not give importance to; the Book does not contain a single word in praise of poetry or poets, nor the *sunnah* lauds it much.

When the Prophet departed from this world, we know what happened regarding the caliphate; the resulting discord further increased the disunity. The Qur'an was collected during the reign of the first Caliph after the battle of Yamāmah, when a great number of the reciters were martyred there. The condition remained the same during his time—nearly two years—and the reign of the second caliph.

Although Islam's fame had spread and its domain increased, thanks to the great victories the Muslims had achieved in those days, it kept them busy and prevented them from paying any thought to academic matters, nor did they try to enhance their level of knowledge. Or, perhaps with their academic level they did not feel need to any increase or enhancement.

Knowledge and its virtue is not something to be perceived by the five senses, which a nation may know from the other, except when that knowledge is related to craft and industry; then its effect is perceivable and general public recognizes it.

Those continuous and growing victories did reawaken in them the characteristics of the Days of Ignorance—the pride and arrogance—which had subsided as a result of the Prophetic teaching and training. But now the spirit of domineering and oppressing nations was sneaking into, and getting hold of them. Its proof may be seen in the division of

the Muslim *ummah* at that time into Arab and clients; also look at the behavior of Muʾāwiyah, then Syria's governor, towards the Muslims, and how he adopted the imperial Caesarian style, in addition to many other indications recorded by history about Muslim armies. This psychology had its effect on the academic progress, especially the Qur'anic teachings.

As for their academic development at that time, their involvement with Qur'an was as before; and there appeared its numerous versions attributed to Zayd, Ubayy, Ibn Masʾūd, and others.

As for *hadīth*, it spread widely—and what a spreading it was? Its narrations and records increased to such an extent that ʿUmar forbade some companions from narration because he was narrating a lot of it. A number of the People of the Book entered into the fold of Islam, and the Muslim *muhaddithīn* took from them a lot of traditions from their books including the stories of their prophets and nations; then they mixed it with what they had preserved from the traditions of the Prophet. Forgery and uncalled for infiltration freely circulated among the *ahādīth*. Today we have got a lot of pieces of traditions, narrated from the companions and their narrators of the early days of Islam, which are clearly rejected by the Qur'an.

We may summarize its reason in three factors:

The high status which people accorded to the Prophet's companionship and to memorization of his *ahādīth*; the prestige and honor enjoyed by the companions and their disciples who narrated to the people the traditions on those companions' authority. This led the people to take traditions—and that too abundantly—even from converted People of the Book, and to intense rivalry among narrators of *hadīth* for gaining precedence and pride of place.

Their intense avidity for remembrance and narration of *hadīth* hindered them from testing the narrative for correctness, and from meditating on it's meaning, especially presenting it to the Qur'an for verification. The Book of God is the foundation on which the religion's structure is built; and the root from which the religion's branches sprout. The Prophet had enjoined them to do so, as his correct traditions show. For example: "Certainly forgers and liars against me will increase; so when a tradition is brought to you, present it to the Qur'an: whatever conforms to it, accepts it, and whatever goes against it, throw it on the wall."

This environment became a fertile ground for circulation of forged traditions in respect of divine attributes, names and actions; about the lapses ascribed to the noble prophets, and slanderous evil deeds attributed

to the Prophet; it took in its fold the myths of genesis and creation, stories of past nations; it even contained the claim that the Qur'an had been altered, and numerous such stories which are similar to what is found in the Torah and the Gospel.

At this juncture the Qur'an and the Hadīth divided advancement and practice between themselves. Seeming advancement became the Qur'an's lot, but practice was reserved for *hadīth*; consequently very soon Qur'an was abandoned. This habit of neglecting to present the *hadīth* to the Qur'an has become a permanent feature of the Muslims' behavior since those early days until now, although they do not admit it in so many words: *And the Messenger cried out: "O my Lord! Surely my people have treated this Qur'an as a forsaken thing."* [25:30]. Exceptions to this malady are rare, countable on fingers.

This negligence is exactly one of the reasons why many ancient national myths and superstitions are still alive in the Muslim nations even after their entering into the fold of Islam. And disease breeds disease.

What happened regarding the caliphate after the Messenger of God turned the opinions of the general Muslims away from the people of the family of the Prophet? Muslims found themselves divided into three groups. There were some who were devoted to them, remained adhered to them; others turned away from them, not caring about them or the position they had in Qur'anic knowledge; there were even those who hated them, felt enmity towards them. All this took place when the Prophet had enjoined them—in traditions whose authenticity is undoubted and whose meaning is accepted by all—that they should learn from the *Ahl al-Bayt* and should not attempt to teach them because they know the Book of God better than the *ummah*; he had reminded them that his family members would never make mistake in Qur'anic exegesis nor would they go astray in its understanding. He had said in the *mutawātir hadīth* of "Two Precious Things": "Surely I am leaving among you two precious things, the Book of God and my descendants, and they shall not separate from each other until they come to me near the reservoir." Some of its narratives add: "Do not teach them, for they are more knowledgeable than you." Also he has said in a nearly *mutawātir hadīth*: "Whoever interprets Qur'an according to his opinion, he should prepare his seat in hell." (It has been fully explained in the discussion on "The Decisive and the Ambiguous Verses,"

in the third[1] volume.)

That was the biggest loss that afflicted the knowledge of the Qur'an, and the way of thinking to which it calls. If you want any proof of this turning away, look at the paucity of the *ahādīth* which have been taken from the *Ahl al-Bayt*. Think about the prestige and status *ʿilmu al-hadīth* enjoyed in the reign of the caliphs, and how the people vied with each other in taking *hadīth*; and then count how many *ahādīth* have been narrated from ʿAlī, al-Hasan and al-Husayn—and particularly those connected with the Qur'anic exegesis—and you will see an astonishing phenomenon: As for the companions, they did not narrate from ʿAlī anything worthy of attention. As for their disciples if we count what they have narrated from him in the whole of Qur'an, it will not reach a hundred narratives. As for al-Hasan, perhaps the number of narratives taken from him would not reach ten; and as for al-Husayn, they have not narrated from him anything worthy of mention. You will understand the true position when you come to know that some people have counted the narrations regarding the Qur'anic exegesis and the number has reached seventeen thousand *ahādīth* from Sunnī chains.[2] The same ratio is found in the tradition of *fiqh* too.[3]

Was it because they had abandoned *Ahl al-Bayt* and turned away from their *hadīth*? Or was it because they had abundantly taken *hadīth* from them, and then it was hidden and forgotten during Umayyad period, because Umayyads were hostile to them? I do not know.

However, seclusion of ʿAlī and his non-participation in the gathering of the Qur'an—in beginning and in end—and the life histories of al-Hasan and al-Husayn (peace be on them all) supports the first alternative.

The situation regarding his *hadīth* deteriorated to such an extent that some people denied that some of his magnificent sermons in the book, *Nahj al-balghah* were of his saying; while no one casts any doubt about *al-khutbat al-batrāʾ* of the Ziyād (of illegitimate birth) or Yazīd's poems extolling intoxicants!

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1 *al-Mīzān* (Eng.), vol. 5. (Trans.)

2 It has been mentioned by al-Suyūtī in *al-Itqān* that he said he has counted the traditions in his *tafsīr* named *Tarjumān al-Qur'an*, and its abridgement known as *al-Durr al-manthūr*. (Auth.)

3 A researcher said that he has been able to find only two narratives from al-Husayn in traditions related to *fiqh*. (Auth.)

The *Ahl al-bayt* remained under oppression and their hadīth forsaken until the time of the Imams, al-Bāqir and al-Ṣādiq (peace be on them), when there was some intermission because of the ensuing conflict between the Umayyads and ʿAbbāsids. Thus they got a chance to describe the hitherto lost traditions of their ancestors, and renew what had been obliterated of their tracks.

However their traditions as well as those of their forefathers and descendants did not remain safe from infiltration, were not free from forgery, and unauthorized insertion—just like the Prophetic traditions. Those two Imams had stated it clearly and mentioned by name some forgers, like Mughīrah b. Saʾīd and Ibn Abi al-Khattāb and others like them. Some Imams refuted many traditions, which were attributed to them and to the Prophet; and commanded their companions and the Shīʾahs to present the narrated traditions to Qur'an, and to accept what conforms to it and reject what goes against it.

But the people (excepting a few individuals) did not follow this order in practice concerning the *ahādīth* of the *Ahl al-Bayt*, and especially in subjects other than *fiqh*; they followed the same path which the general Muslims had taken in respect of the Prophetic traditions.

The malady spread to such an extent that a group said that the apparent meanings of the Qur'an had no authority at all[1]; while the books of traditions like *Misbāh al-shariah*, *Fiqh al-Ridā* and *Jāmiʾ al-akhbār* had authority. They went to such an extent that some of them said that *hadīth* explains the Qur'an even when the former goes against the clear meaning of the latter. It is not different from some Sunnīs view that *hadīth* abrogates the Book! Perhaps what is seen in the Muslims' behavior is what a research scholar has said: "The Sunnīs took the Book and abandoned the *Ahl al-Bayt*; the result was that they forsook the Book too, because the Prophet, has said: 'Surely they will not separate from each other.' And the Shīʾahs took the *Ahl al-Bayt* and abandoned the Book; the result was that they forsook the *Ahl al-Bayt* too, because of the same Prophetic saying: 'Surely they will not separate from each other.' Thus the *ummah* collectively forsook the Qur'an and the *Ahl al-Bayt* (the Book and the *Sunnah*) altogether."

The path they had taken regarding *hadīth* was one of the factors that caused severance of relationship between Islamic subjects (like religion

1 The author refers to the Akhbārīs' view. (Trans.)

and literature) and the Qur'an. This happened while it is known that all Islamic subjects are like branches and fruits growing from this good tree (Qur'an) whose root is firmly fixed and whose branches are in heaven, yielding its fruit in every season by the permission of its Lord. You will clearly see it if you look at these subjects: you will find that they have been developed and arranged in a way that they do not need Qur'an at all. It is possible for a student to learn and complete all Islamic subjects—morphology, grammar, rhetoric, language, *hadīth*, *rijāl*, critical knowledge of *hadīth*, jurisprudence and its fundamentals; he may become an expert and authority in these branches of knowledge without even reciting the Qur'an or touching the Book. So what share has actually been given to Qur'an in Muslims' lives? Its recital is only for earning reward in the next world or using it as amulet for protection of their children from misfortunes and untoward occurrences! Learn lesson if you have any understanding.

Now, let us return to our original topic:

You have heard what was the position of Qur'an and *hadīth* during ʿUmar's reign. In the same period there was increase in scholastic debate, as the Islamic victories naturally led to mingling of Muslims with other religions and groups, and there were scholars, rabbis, bishops and patricians in those religions who discussed and debated on religious matters. In this way, scholastic theology got boosted although it was not much arranged or recorded—its early books are attributed to later scholars.

It continued during ʿUthman's time, but people turned against the caliph. However, he succeeded in gathering of various collections of Qur'an and uniting the Muslims on one version.

The same was the condition during ʿAlī's caliphate; but he remained busy in reform of Muslim society, as there were internal conflicts which led to battles one after another. However, he founded Arabic grammar (syntax) and dictated its general broad lines to his companion, Abu al-Aswad al-Dualī, and told him to write down smaller details. He could not do more, but he delivered important sermons and *ahadīth,* which contain comprehensive materials of religious knowledge and finest Qur'anic mysteries. In addition, his scholastic discussions are recorded in collections of *hadīth*.

This situation of Qur'an and *hadīth* continued in Muʾāwīyah's reign and after him during the Umayyad and ʿAbbāsid periods' up to nearly beginning of the fourth century of *hijrah*. It coincided with the end of the time of twelve Shīʾite Imams. Nothing important happened in respect

of discussions about Qur'an and *hadīth*—except what happened during Muʾāwīyah's reign as he tried his utmost to destroy the name of the *Ahl al-Bayt* and obliterate their tracks. For this purpose he started forgery of *ahādīth* in an organized way. The religious rule turned into an autocratic despotic government, and the Islamic *sunnah* gave way to Byzantine splendor and authority. Also in this same period ʿUmar b. ʿAbdi al-ʿAzīz gave order to put *hadīth* in writing; before that *muhaddithūn* used to take, preserve and transmit traditions verbally without recording them on paper.

In this very period, Arabic poetry got wide prevalence in society. It began in Muʾāwiyah's time, as he was very keen to spread it, and it continued during Umayyad and ʿAbbāsid periods. Sometimes, they rewarded two lines of poetry, or a fine literary point with hundreds and thousands of dinār. People dedicated themselves to poetry and its transmission, and to history of Arabia and their battles; they earned through it magnificent wealth. The Umayyads benefited very much from spread of poetry and paid good money for it, because it supported their stand *vis-à-vis* Hāshimites; the same advantage was taken from it by Abbasids *vis-à-vis* Fātimids. The rulers paid high respects to scholars in order that they could help them against masses, and could make them do what they (rulers) wanted.

Poetry and literature got so much hold on academic circles that you would see many scholars, while engaged in intellectual or academic discussions, offering a poetry or well-known proverb as their proof, and winning the debate. Often they base theoretical purports on linguistic rules—at least they begin with linguistic explanation of the name of the subject and then enter into its main topics. All these things do have deep influence on scholars' thoughts and their academic proceedings.

In those very days scholastic discussions got wide prevalence; many books and booklets were written on this subject. Soon the scholars were divided into two big sects: the Ashʾarites and the Muʾtazilites. The seeds of their views were present at the time of the caliphs—nay, of the Prophet himself. Its proof may be found in the recorded arguments of ʿAlī regarding compulsion and delegation, *qadar* and ability, etc. and in the narrated *ahādīth* of the Prophet on these subjects.[1] What happened at this time

1 For example: His (may God bless him and his progeny) saying which is narrated from him: "There is no compulsion, nor delegation; rather it is a position between the two." And his saying: "The Qadariyyah are the Mazdaists

was clear distinction of the two groups in their opinions. The Muʾtazilites accorded total authority to dictates of reason over apparent aspects of religion, like the beliefs that good and evil may be understood through intellect; that it is wrong to give precedence to something without a reason; that it is repugnant to force someone to do what is beyond his power; that man is totally independent in his actions, and that he has been given all power, etc. The Ashʾarites, on the other hand, gave total authority to apparent factors of religion on the dictates of reason, like the rejection of idea that good and evil could be understood through intellect; that it was quite in order to give precedence without a reason; that man is not independent in his actions, rather he is under compulsion; that the speech of God is eternal, and many similar ideas which are found in their books.

Then they wrote and arranged the subject of scholastic theology, coined its terminologies, and added to it some issues with which they faced the philosophers in imaginative topics of general proposition. This happened when the works of Greek philosophy were translated into Arabic and its study spread among the Muslims. Anyhow, it is not correct to say (as some have done) that the scholastic theology began in Islam or divided into Iʾtizāl and Ashʾariyyah after the transfer of philosophy to Arabia. The existence in the early traditions of their major issues and opinions is sufficient to refute such an idea.

The Muʾtazilites continued to multiply in number, and their splendor and might kept on increasing from their advent to the early ʿAbbāsid period (early third century of *hijrah*); then they began their downward slide until the Ayyūbids extinguished their life. Only God knows how many people were massacred at that time and later for the crime of Iʾtizāl. This left the field clear for the Ashʾarites to indulge into scholastic discourses without anybody being there to oppose them; so they entered its arena (while previously their jurisprudents used to brand it a sin!). Now, Ashʾariyyah is the prevalent school among the Sunnīs today.

The Shīʾites had precedence in scholastic discussions. They began speaking in this vein soon after the departure of the Prophet. Most of their scholars were companions of the Prophet e.g. Salmān, Abū Dharr, Miqdād, ʿAmmār and ʿAmr b. al-Hamq and others. Also there were among the *tābiʾīn* people like Rushayd, Kumayl and Maytham and the descendants of ʿAlī. Umayyads annihilated them; yet they put down new roots and were

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of this *ummah*." (Auth.)

reinvigorated in the days of the two Imams al-Bāqir and al-Ṣādiq (peace be on them). They took part in discussions and wrote books and booklets. Their efforts continued in spite of the persecution and suppression of the governments. However they were given some breathing space during the Buwayhids' rule[1]. Then again they were strangulated until the advent of the Safavid kingdom[2] in Iran—and this situation continues till today.

The characteristic style of their scholastic discussions was more in conformity with Muʾtazilites than with Ashʾarites. The Shīʾite and Muʾtazilite views were almost similar in many aspects, as for example they too believed that good and evil were perceivable through intellect, to give precedence without reason was wrong, and in the questions of *qadar* and delegation. This similarity made some people to think that the Shīʾites and the Muʾtazilites went on the same way in scholastic matters, like two competing horses. But they have totally missed the point, because the fundamentals which are narrated from the Imams of *Ahl al-Bayt*—which are the authority in the Shīʾite sect—have no affinity with the Muʾtazilite taste and style.

In short, the scholastic theology is a noble branch of knowledge, which defends the true religious precepts. But the Muslim scholars went awry in their debates and discussions and they made no distinction between intellectual propositions; they mixed truth with acceptable, as we shall explain it later to some extent.

During the same period, ancients' books were translated into Arabic; they were related to logic, mathematics, physics, divinity, medicine, and practical *hikmah*. Some were translated in Umayyad reign, and the exercise was completed in the early ʿAbbāsid period. Hundreds of books were rendered into Arabic from the Greek, Latin, Sanskirit, Persian and Suriyac languages. People became engaged in studies of various fields of knowledge, and in a short time they formed independent views and opinions. Of course, the religious scholars were enraged by this "development," especially when they looked at the open attacks against the accepted religious issues launched by atheists, philosophers, Manichaeans and others; they were also infuriated by the Muslim philosophers' disparaging the religion and religionists, and insulting the fundamentals of Islam and landmarks of shariah. And there is no disease like ignorance!

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1 About 4th century of *hijrah*. (Auth.)

2 Early 10th century of *hijrah*. (Auth.)

What inflamed their anger most was the philosophers' habit of basing the issues on the principles derived from Greek astronomy and physics, like the arrangement of Ptolemaic celestial bodies, and their belief that those skies were the fifth nature; they could not be rent or mended; they were eternal as was the astronomical system in person; likewise the elements were eternal in species; all species were eternal and so on. In fact, all these issues were based on principles that were taken for granted and for which philosophy had not established any proof. Yet ignorant persons posing as philosophers were presenting them as if they were proven issues. The atheists and their likes who professed to believe in philosophy added to it other false issues like belief in transmigration of soul, rejection of resurrection, particularly the physical one. They used all these suppositions for ridiculing literal meanings of religion. Sometimes one of them would say: Religion is a collection of blindly followed rituals and responsibilities, which the prophets had brought for training and perfecting the simple and primitive minds; but a philosopher who has attained real knowledge, does not need them or their message, they had firm standing on the path of argumentation.

This behavior prompted and called the jurisprudents and scholastic scholars to stand against them and refute their views; to annihilate their influence by all possible means, debating with them, cursing and disavowing them, declaring them out of the fold of Islam. In this way, they broke their force, dispersed their gathering, and destroyed their books during Mutawakkil's reign. Then philosophy was on the verge of extinction; until it was revived by the Second Teacher, Abū Nasr al-Fārābī (d. 339 AH) and then al-Shaykh al-Raīs Abū ʿAlī al-Husayn b. ʿAbdillāh b. Sīnā (d. 428 AH) followed by other stalwarts of philosophy like Abū ʿAlī b. Miskwayh, Ibn Rushd al-Andulusī and others. Since then, philosophy has remained alive although the number of its students has always been small; it rotates between strength and weakness.

Although philosophy was first brought to Arabia, very few Arabs, like al-Kindī and Ibn Rushd got fame as philosophers. Lately it has settled in Iran.

The Muslim scholars of *ʿilm al-kalām* opposed philosophy and vehemently refuted it. However, most of them accorded acceptance to Logic as they found it conforming to the natural way of argumentation; so they wrote books and booklet on this discipline.

But, as you have been told earlier, they erred in its use: They applied

the rules of real definition and its parts on mentally posited concepts, and used the proof in propositions of subjective consideration—while in fact proof had nothing to do with it, it was the field of argumentative syllogism. You will find them talking on scholastic issues like good and evil, reward and punishment, forfeiture and grace, and they describe its genus, class and limits, they describe its definition. Likewise, they argue regarding issues of *usūl* and *al-kalām* (in branches of religion) on the basis of inevitability and impossibility; it is an example of using realities in mentally posited issues. On the other hand, they say that: 'This is obligatory for God', or 'This is improper for God'. In this way they make subjective considerations rule over realities—and they think that it is proof! In fact, it is just a poetic analogy.

They went ahead in this respect to such a stage that one of them said: God is so sublime that subjective consideration cannot creep into His command and action, such consideration is mere allusion; therefore whatever He has created or legislated are real factual matters. Another one said: God has all power; it would be beneath His omnipotence to give an order and not to be able to establish a proof for it; therefore proof covers both created things and legislated orders. There are other such absurd sayings that, by my life, are tragedies of knowledge and people of knowledge; and even greater tragedy is for me to feel compelled to record and discuss them in academic works.

In this same period, Sūfism appeared among the Muslims. Its rudiments were found in the garb of asceticism. Then the Sūfīs began openly showing their colors in early ʿAbbāsid period, when people like Abū Yazīd, Junayd, al-Shiblī and Maʾrūf appeared on the scene.

They believe that the true way for reaching real human perfection and attaining realities of cognition is to enter into an Sūfī *tarīqah* (path). This path is a sort of diligence in practice of shariah for attaining to the reality. A greater part of them—among the Shīʾites and Sunnītes both—trace their chain to ʿAlī.

They claim to perform some supernatural deeds, and their talks contain things that go against clear concepts of religion and dictate of reason (saying that those expressions have correct interpretations which are beyond the understanding of general people!). Consequently, *fuqahāʾ* and general Muslims could not tolerate such utterances; they opposed them, avoided them and decreed that they were infidels. Sometimes they were imprisoned, whipped, killed, crucified, chased away, or banished. All this

happened because of their moral depravity and their loose talks that they called mysteries of the shariah. But if the things were as they claimed, and the Sūfīs' path was the kernel of reality and concepts of religion were merely its shell, then the legislator of the shariah had more right to pay attention to it and make it public—as they are doing. On the other hand, if it is not truth, then what is there after truth except error and falsehood?

The Sūfīs, to begin with, expressed their views relating to the path in words only. After finding some place in people's hearts, they started writing books and tracts after the third century of *hijrah*. Then they went ahead and declared in clear words their opinion about reality and path together; and what they wrote in prose and poetry spread to all corners of the world.

Their number kept increasing, and so did their strength and influence among Muslim masses. They reached the pinnacle of their prestige in the sixth and seventh centuries of *hijrah*.

Then began their retreat; their status suffered and general public turned away from them.

There were two factors that led to their downfall:

First: When a system, which involves general public, becomes highly popular attracting the masses, insincere people take its advantage seeking to gain worldly riches through it; they disguise themselves, showing that they were deeply rooted in that system and are particularly attached to it. This exploitation makes people dislike, nay, hate the whole system.

Second: A group of their *mashāyikh* said that the way to know one's self was an innovation, which the Legislator of the shariah had not enacted, yet it was a pleasing way which God is pleased with, as He was pleased with monasticism which the Christians had innovated. God says: *... and (as for) monasticism, they innovated it—We did not prescribe it to them—only to seek Allah's pleasure, but they did not observe it with its due observance* (57:27).

The masses agreed whole-heartedly with it. This opened the way to them to create for it rituals and etiquettes hitherto unknown in shariah. They went on innovating fresh procedure that resulted in discarding a procedure of the shariah. Ultimately a time came when the shariah was placed on one side and the *tarīqah* (way) stood on another side. Not surprisingly, it led to indulgence in unlawful things, discarding of obligatory practices of religion—in short, shariah was treated as abrogated, there appeared groups like al-Qalandariyyah, and nothing remained of Sūfism except beggary and addiction to opium and bhang—which they

call 'obliteration of the self'.

What have the Book and the *Sunnah* to say on this subject? They guide to the verdict of reason. According to them, it is true that behind the external aspect of the shariah there are realities that are its hidden or esoteric meanings. It is also correct to say that man has a way to reach that reality. But that way is to diligently follow and obey the external aspect of the shariah—nothing else. Far be it from us to think that there was any esoteric idea which the external practices did not lead to; it is the external which identifies the hidden or esoteric realities, and leads to them. Far be it from us to suppose that there was a nearer path than the one laid down by the Bringer of religion, but the Prophet did not pay heed to it, or showed negligence towards it or ignored it for some reason. Remember what God says: *... and We have revealed the Book to you explaining clearly everything* (16:89).

To make a long story short, three methods developed for searching and uncovering of realities: the external meaning of religion, the way of intellectual research, and that of purification of soul. A Muslim group adopted each method—and the three groups continue to dispute and quarrel with one another. They are like the angles of a triangle; if one of them becomes bigger, the other two are bound to reduce and vice versa. The methods used in Qur'anic exegesis greatly differed from one another resulting from vast differences in exegetes' taste. Usually they imposed their own academic views on the Qur'an, instead of letting the Qur'an shape their views—with rare exceptions.

You have seen that the Book confirms all that is true in each method and way. It cannot be that there is a true hidden reality, which the external sense does not conform to, or that there is a truth—hidden or apparent—which is opposed by true proof.

That is why some *ʿulamāʾ*, according to the knowledge they had, and with diverse tastes, tried to bring conformance between apparent senses of religion and *ʿirfān*, like Ibn al-ʿArabī, ʿAbd al-Razzāq al-Kāshānī, Ibn Fahd, the Second Martyr and al-Fayd al-Kāshānī; while others endeavoured to bring agreement between philosophy and *ʿirfān*, like Abū Nasr al-Fārābī, al-Shaykh al-Suhrawardī (the illuminist) and al-Shaykh Sāin al-Dīn Mahammad Turkeh. Still others attempted to bring conformity between apparent senses of religion and philosophy, like al-Qādī Saʾīd and others; while a fourth group endeavoured to make all the above disciplines conform with one another, like Ibn Sīnā in his exegesis and books, and

Mullā Sadrā in his books and tracts in addition to some later scholars.

In spite of that, the deep-rooted difference continues as before; the more attempts are made to uproot, it the deeper go the roots; the more water is thrown on this fire, the higher rise the flames.

You find that no amulet is of any benefit.

Scholars of every discipline accuse experts of other fields of ignorance, atheism, or stupidity, while the masses disavow all of them together.

This is the result of initial error when the *ummah* did not pay heed in the beginning to the call of the Book for joint meditation: *and hold fast to the rope of Allah and be not divided ...* (3:103)

Conversation drifts from one topic to another.

O God! Guide us to what would make You pleased with us; unite our word on truth; give us a guardian from You; and give us a helper from You.

Examining Narrations

(1) It is reported [by al-Suyūtī] under the verse: *O People of the Book! Indeed has come to you Our Messenger making clear to you much of what you concealed of the Book ...* Ibn al-Darīs, al-Nasāʾī, Ibn Jarīr, Ibn Abī Hātim and al-Hākim (who said that it was correct) have narrated from Ibn ʿAbbās that he said, "Whoever denies stoning, he denies the Qurʾan from whence he thinks not. God has said: *O People of the Book! Indeed has come to you Our Messenger making clear to you much of what you concealed of the Book*. So, stoning was among what they had concealed." (*al-Durr al-manthūr*)

Author's comments: It points to what we shall write under the verse: *O Messenger! Let not those grieve you who strive together ...* (5:41) that how the Jews had concealed the commandment of stoning in the days of the Prophet, and how he exposed it.

(2) *al-Tafsīr* of al-Qummī explains the words of God: *after a cessation of the messengers*, as 'after discontinuation of the messengers'.

(3) [al-Kulaynī narrates] through his chains from Abū Hamzah Thābit b. Dīnār al-Thumālī and Abu al-Rabīʾ that he said, "We performed *hajj* with Abū Jaʾfar in the year when Hishām b. ʿAbd al-Malik too went for *hajj*; and there was with him Nāfiʾ *mawlā* (client) of ʿUmar b. al-Khattāb. He looked at Abū Jaʾfar in the *rukn* of the Kaʾbah and people had gathered around him. Nāfiʾ said, 'O leader of the faithful! Who is it that people are pressing around him?' [Hishām] said, 'He is the prophet of the people of

Kufah; he is Muḥammad b. ʿAlī.' [Nāfiʾ] said, 'I bear witness that I shall certainly go to him and ask him about problems which no one would give me their reply except a Prophet or successor of a Prophet.' [Hishām] said, 'Then go and ask him; perhaps you would put him to shame.'

"So Nāfiʾ came (near) until he leaned on people; then he was close to Abū Jaʾfar. Then he said, 'O Muḥammad b. ʿAlī! I have read the Torah, the Gospel, the Zabūr and the Qur'an; and I have understood its lawful and its unlawful; and I have come to ask you about problems which no one would reply except a prophet or a successor of the prophet.'" [The narrator] said, "So Abū Jaʾfar raised his head and said, 'Ask whatever you want to.' [Nāfiʾ] said, 'Tell me how many years (had passed) between Jesus and Muḥammad?' [Abū Jaʾfar] said, 'Should I inform you according to my view or your view?' [Nāfiʾ] said, 'Tell me according to both together.' He [Abū Jaʾfar] said, 'As according to my view, five-hundred years, and as according to your view, six-hundred years.'" (*al-Kāfī*)

Author's comments: Various traditions are narrated concerning the reason of revelation of verses. For example, al-Tabarī has narrated from ʿIkrimah that the Jews had queried the Messenger of God about the law of stoning. So he asked who was the most knowledgeable of them; they pointed to Ibn Sūriyā. He [the Messenger of God] adjured him by God whether there was the commandment of stoning (the adulterer and adulteress) in their books. He said, "When it increased in our society, we flogged hundred (lashes) and shaved (their) heads." The Prophet sentenced them to be stoned. Then God revealed: *O People of the Book! Indeed has come to you Our Messenger making clear to you much of what you concealed ... and guides them to the straight path* [5:15–16].

(4) Also he has narrated from Ibn ʿAbbās that he said, "Ibn Ubayy, Bahrī b. ʿAmr and Shās b. ʿAdiyy came to the Messenger of God; he talked with them and they talked with him. He called them to God and warned them of His punishment. So they said, 'What are you frightening us with O Muḥammad! We, by God! Are the sons of God and His beloved ones'—they used the words of the Christians. Then God revealed about them: *And the Jews and the Christians say: 'We are the sons of Allah and his beloved ones.' Say: 'Why does He then chastise you for your sins?' ...* [5:18]"

(5) He has also narrated from Ibn ʿAbbās that he said, "The Messenger

of God invited the Jews to Islam; he excited their interest in Islam and frightened them, but they refused to listen. Then Maʾādh b. Jabal, Saʾd b. ʿUbādah and ʿUqbah b. Wahb said to them, 'O group of Jews! Fear God, because, by God, you certainly know that he is the Messenger of God; you were telling us about him before his being sent, and describing to us his attributes.' So Rāfiʾ b. Huraymalah and Wahb b. Yahūdā said, 'We did not tell it to you; and God has not revealed any book after Moses, nor did he send any bringer of good news or any warner after him.' Thereupon, God revealed: *O People of the Book! Indeed Our Messenger has come to you explaining to you after a cessation of the messengers* ... [5:19]"

(6) al-Suyūtī has narrated it in *al-Durr al-manthur* from Ibn ʿAbbās and others; and has narrated other stories too.

These traditions like most of the narratives giving theoretical reasons are, in fact, mere attempts to fit some occurrences on a verse, and then claiming that it was revealed for this reason. These are merely theoretical reasons; the verses most probably do have general connotation.

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Verses 20–26

The verses are not without connection with the preceding ones: they show how they broke some of the covenants they had made for listening to and obeying Moses. How they confronted Moses with open rejection of his order and how they were inflicted for the sin with the Divine punishment of wandering in wilderness.

وَإِذْ قَالَ مُوسَىٰ لِقَوْمِهِ يَا قَوْمِ اذْكُرُوا نِعْمَةَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ إِذْ جَعَلَ فِيكُمْ أَنْبِيَاءَ وَجَعَلَكُمْ مُلُوكًا وَآتَاكُمْ مَا لَمْ يُؤْتِ أَحَدًا مِنَ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٢٠﴾

(5:20) ***And when Moses said to his people: "O my people! Remember the favor of Allah upon you when He raised prophets among you and made you kings and gave you what He had not given any other in the worlds."***

The verses related to Moses' life show that this incident—the call of Moses to them to enter the holy land—had occurred after their exodus from Egypt; as the phrase: "and made you kings," in this verse too proves it.

The clause: "and gave you what He had not given any other in the worlds," shows that before that time they were favored with several signs of divine favor, like manna and quails, gushing forth of water from stone and making the clouds to give shade over them.

The phrase: *the nation of transgressors*, repeated twice, shows that even before this event they were habitually opposing and disobeying the divine messenger, that is, Moses, until transgression became a confirmed trait of their character.

All these aspects prove that this wandering in wilderness had occurred during the last phase of Moses's life among them, and that most of the events described in the Qur'an concerning them had taken place before it.

Moses' words: "Remember the favor of God upon you," point to the sum total of all the favors God had bestowed on them. He has used it to prepare them for what he was going to command them, that is, to enter the holy land. He reminded them of the Lord's favors, in order that they might become enthusiastic for receiving more favors and blessings. God

had bestowed His bounties upon them by sending Moses to them, guiding them to His religion, delivering them from Pharaoh, sending the Torah to them and legislating a shariah. They had got almost everything; now there was only one thing to complete these favors that they should have a holy land where they would live in and rule over it independently.

Moses, while enumerating the favors, divided them into three categories:

First, ... ***He raised prophets among you:*** It could refer to the prophets in their direct ancestral line, that is, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and those after them, or specifically to those from the Children of Israel, that is, Joseph, the tribes, Moses and Aaron. Prophethood is another favor.

Second, ... ***and made you kings:*** The word *mulūk* (plural of *al-malik*) is usually translated as "kings." Here it means: free from humiliation of Pharaohs' subjugation, independent of tyrants' oppression. He is truly a king who independently manages the affairs of his own self, his family and his property. The Israelites, at the time of Moses, followed a social system that was the best of all. It was the system of monotheism which exhorted them to obey God and His messenger, to enforce complete justice in society and non-aggression against other nations; they did not allow anyone of their group to acquire mastery over them; there was no such class distinction among them which could disrupt their social order. There was no one over them except Moses—and he was a prophet who did not behave like a king or a tribal chief who gains upper hand unjustly.

Someone has offered another explanation for this phrase: "made you kings"; that God had decreed that there would be kings among them beginning with Tālūt[1], then David and going to their last king. The speech, accordingly, refers to the future and is the news of the unseen, because kingdom did not come to them except sometime after Moses. There is no difficulty in this explanation, except that the phrase: "and made you kings," does not agree with it. If this explanation were perfect, God would have said: 'and made *among* you kings', as He has said: "He raised prophets *among* you."

Possibly, the "kingdom" could merely indicate concentration of authority in some members; it would then include the custom of sheikh-dom. In this light, Moses too would be a king, followed by Joshua; before them Joseph was king; this would reach to well-known kings, Tālūt, David,

1 King Saul in the Bible. (Ed.)

Solomon and others. But the above-mentioned objection applies to this explanation also.

Third, *... and gave you what He had not given any other in the worlds:* It reminds them of the divine care and blessings that were joined with clear important signs. Those favors guaranteed that their lives would improve and straighten out if they remained firm on their words and adhered to their covenant. Those were the clear signs that surrounded them from all sides during their stay in Egypt, and after they were delivered from Pharaoh and his people. It is a fact that no nation before Moses's time was given so many and so continuous signs, miracles, and brilliant proofs. Israelites were the first to be blessed with such favors in their nation's life.

Accordingly, there is no reason to say (as some have done) that "the worlds" means 'worlds of that time'. The verse asserts that no nation throughout the world up to that time was blessed with so many favors as were the Israelites. And it is a fact.

يَا قَوْمِ ادْخُلُوا الْأَرْضَ الْمُقَدَّسَةَ الَّتِي كَتَبَ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ وَلَا تَرْتَدُّوا عَلَىٰ أَدْبَارِكُمْ فَتَنْقَلِبُوا خَاسِرِينَ ﴿٢١﴾

(5:21) "*O my people! Enter the holy land, which Allah has prescribed for you and turn not on your backs, for then you will turn back losers.*"

Moses ordered them to enter the holy land; but looking at their past he knew they would not obey him. That is why he emphasized the order by forbidding them to turn on their backs and warning them of the consequences of disobedience, that they would turn losers.

The proof that he was apprehensive of their disobedience because of their past behavior is found in his description "transgressors" used for them after their refusal to enter. Just one disobedience does not justify the use of this active participle for them; it is generally used when one repeatedly and continuously indulges in that action.

The land is described as holy. Exegetes have explained it as the land free from polytheism because prophets and believers made it their abode. There is nothing in the Qur'an to explain this word. Yet there are in it other expressions nearer in meaning. For example:

... to the remote mosque of which We have blessed the precincts ... (17:1). *And We made the people who were deemed weak to inherit the East*

and the West of the land, which we had blessed; ... (7:137). To bless a land means only to place in it a great good; and a part of that great good is establishment of the religion and removal of the impurityof polytheism.

The clause: "God has prescribed for you," apparently means that God had decreed that they would abide therein. The later coming clause: *So it shall surely be forbidden to them for forty years*, does not contradict it, rather it supports it, because the clause: "God has prescribed for you," is general, it has left vague many details—it does not say for what time and for whom it has been assigned; it is addressed to the *ummah* without specifying who comes under its circle. It has been said that all the people who had been addressed and were given that order, had expired and perished in the wilderness, and it was their sons and grandsons who entered the holy land under Joshua b. Nun. In any case, the clause: *So it shall surely be forbidden to them for forty years*, indicates that this assignment was to take place after this period.

This prescription is seen in the verses: *And We desired to bestow a favor upon those who were deemed weak in the land, and to make them the Imams, and to make them the heirs, and to grant them power in the land* (28:5–6). Moses hoped that his people would get that land provided they sought help from God and were patient, as God says: *Moses said to his people: "Ask help from Allah and be patient; surely the land is Allah's; He causes such of His servants to inherit it as He pleases, and the end is for those who fear* (God)."*They said: "We have been persecuted before you came to us and since you have come to us." He said: "It may be that your Lord will destroy your enemy and make you rulers in the land, then He will see how you act"* (7:128–9).

And it is this promise whose fulfilment is mentioned in these words: *And We made the people who were deemed weak to inherit the East and the West of the land which We had blessed; and the good word of your Lord was fulfilled in the Children of Israel because they bore up (sufferings) patiently; ...* (7:137). This verse shows that their domination over the holy land and their settlement there was a divine word; a decided fact and firm decree provided they remained patient in God's obedience, in avoidance of His disobedience and in bitter happenings.

We have widened the circle of patience because the verse is unrestricted, and also because hard events were piling up over them during Moses's time in addition to the divine commands and prohibitions. The more they persisted in disobedience, the harder became their assignments,

as may be seen in their stories mentioned in the noble Qur'an.

This is the apparent Qur'anic connotation of prescription of the holy land for them. Yet the verses are vague as to its time and extent. However, the following verses make it clear that this prescription was conditional, not unrestricted, or irrevocable: *It may be that your Lord will have mercy on you, and if you again return (to disobedience) We too will return (to punishment). And We have made hell a prison for the unbelievers* (17:8); [Moses's words in the above-mentioned verse]: *"It may be that your Lord will destroy your enemy and make you rulers in the land, then He will see how you act"* (7:128–9). *And when Moses said to his people: "Call to mind Allah's favor to you when He delivered you from Pharaoh's people ... And when your Lord made it known: 'If you are grateful, I would certainly give you more; and if you are ungrateful, My chastisement is truly severe'"* (14:6–7).

An exegete has said that the words of Moses, *God has prescribed for you*, refer to the promise God had given to Abraham; then he quoted from the Old Testament[1] the divine promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, that He would give the land to their progeny; and has gone to some length in this topic. But keeping in view the limit we have put for our book, it is not of much concern to us to discuss it, no matter whether those promises were in the original Torah or are the handiwork of manipulators and forgers. Certainly the Qur'an is not explained through the Torah.

قَالُوا يَا مُوسَىٰ إِنَّ فِيهَا قَوْمًا جَبَّارِينَ وَإِنَّا لَنْ نَدْخُلَهَا حَتَّىٰ يَخْرُجُوا مِنْهَا فَإِنْ يَخْرُجُوا مِنْهَا فَإِنَّا دَاخِلُونَ ﴿٢٢﴾

1 The Genesis reports that when Abraham passed into the land of Canaan, the Lord appeared unto him and said: "Unto thy seed will I give this land" (Gen. 12:7); "In the same day the Lord made a covenant with Abram [Abraham], saying, 'Unto thy seed have I given this land from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates.'" (Gen. 15:18)
The Deuteronomy gives the following details: "The Lord our God spoke unto us in Horeb, saying, 'Ye have dwelt long enough in this mount: Turn you, and take your journey, and go to the mount of the Amorites, and unto all the places nigh thereunto, in the plain, in the hills, and in the vale, and in the south, and by the sea side, to the land of the Canaanites, and unto Lebanon, unto the great river, the river Euphrates. Behold, I have set the land before you: go in and possess the land which the Lord sware unto your fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give unto them and to their seed after them.'" (Deut. 1:6–8). (Auth.)

(5:22) ***They said: "O Moses! surely there is a strong race in it, and we will on no account enter it until they go out from it, so if they go out from it, then surely we will enter."***

al-Rāghib has said:

> "The real meaning of *al-Jabr* is to restore a thing with some force. It is said: *Jabartuhu fa-injabara wa ijtabara,* 'I mended it, so it became mended and restored.'"

He further says:

> "Sometimes *al-Jabr* is used for restoring and mending [without connotation of force]; for example, the saying of ʿAlī (may God be pleased with him): 'O who sets every broken (thing or heart), O who makes easy every difficult (situation or problem)'; in this sense they call bread *Jābir b. habbah* (restorer son of grain); at other times it is used for force and compulsion only, as [the Prophet] has said: *La jabra wa la tafwīd* ('There is no compulsion nor delegation')."

He goes on to say:

> "*al-Ijbār* (to compel) actually means to make someone to restore another one, but it is commonly used for mere compulsion; the clause: 'I forced him', has the meaning of, 'I compelled him.'"

He has further explained:

> "*al-Jabbār* (tyrant, gigantic, insolent) when used for a man implies that having a defect, he tries to make it up by claiming for himself a high position which he does not deserve. It is only used in derogatory sense. God says: *... and every insolent opposer was disappointed* [14:15]. *and He has not made me insolent, unblessed* [19:32]. '*... there is a strong race in it*' (5:22)."

Also he writes:

> "Keeping in view the idea of overwhelming by towering over one's fellows, they say: a *jabbārah* (giant) date tree; a *jabbārah* (colossal) she-camel."

It is now clear that "strong race" in this verse refers to the group with power and authority who compel people to obey them.

The sentence, "and we will never enter it until they go out from it," makes their entering the land conditional on the exit of the strong race from it; in reality it is rejection of Moses's order, although they promised again to enter it if their condition was met: "so if they go out from it,

them surely we will enter."

A number of traditions have been narrated describing those Amalekites, how huge were their bodies and how tall their stature, they contain such strange things as no sane person can accept; no archaeological findings support those stories, nor any physical research has found their trace. Obviously those traditions are mere forgeries, inserted in Islamic literature.

قَالَ رَجُلَانِ مِنَ الَّذِينَ يَخَافُونَ أَنْعَمَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمَا ادْخُلُوا عَلَيْهِمُ الْبَابَ فَإِذَا دَخَلْتُمُوهُ فَإِنَّكُمْ غَالِبُونَ ۚ وَعَلَى اللَّهِ فَتَوَكَّلُوا إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٢٣﴾

(5:23) ***Two men of those who feared, upon both of whom Allah had bestowed a favor, said: "Enter upon them by the gate, for when you have entered it you shall surely be victorious, and on Allah you should rely if you are believers."***

The context clearly shows that the fear means fear of God; there were people who feared God and avoided disobedience of God and His prophet; and these two men belonged to that group; that is why they said what they said. Moreover, they had a distinction among that group that God had bestowed His favor upon them, it has been earlier mentioned in this book that when "favor" comes in the Qur'an without any condition, it denotes divine *wilāyah* (friendship); so, the two men were among the friends of God. This in itself indicates that the above-mentioned fear refers to fear of God, because friends of God are not afraid of anything, they fear only God. He says: *Now surely the friends of Allah—they shall have no fear nor shall they grieve* (10:62).

It may possibly be said that bestowal of divine favor is related to fear; that is, God had bestowed His fear upon them. In the phrase: "those who feared," object of the verb, "feared," is omitted because it is understood from the phrase: "upon both of whom God had bestowed a favor," because clearly they were not afraid of the strong race, otherwise they would not have exhorted the Israelites to enter as they said: "'Enter upon them by the gate'."

Some exegetes have given a strange explanation: The phrase: "of those who feared," means: Two men from among those whom the Children of Israel feared and upon both whom God had bestowed a favor by guiding them to Islam. They support it with the recital of Ibn Jubayr, who read,

yukhāfūn (in passive case; meaning: they were feared). They say: Two men from the Amalekites had believed in Moses and joined the Children of Israel, then they advised them as described in the verse, showing the way to vanquish Amalekites and capture their towns and land.

This explanation is based on some explanatory traditions; but they are solitary narratives, and are not supported by the Qur'an, etc.

"Enter upon them by the gate": "Gate" may refer to the first town of that strong race, nearest to the Israelites; reportedly, it was called Arihā', such usage is not uncommon. Or it may refer to the gate of the town.

"for when you have entered it you shall surely be victorious": It was their promise to the Israelites for victory over the enemy. They gave such a definite promise, as they had full faith in Moses who had said that God had prescribed the holy land for them—because they knew that his statements were true. Or, probably they knew about this victory through the light of divine friendship.

Most of the Shī'ah and Sunnī exegetes have written that the two men were Joshua b. Nun and Caleb b. Yuqina, and that they were among the twelve chiefs of the Israelites.

Then the two men invited them to rely on God: "and on God should you rely if you are believers," because God is sufficient for him who relies on Him; the call was meant to set their minds at rest and give them encouragement.

قَالُوا يَا مُوسَىٰ إِنَّا لَنْ نَدْخُلَهَا أَبَدًا مَا دَامُوا فِيهَا ۖ فَاذْهَبْ أَنْتَ وَرَبُّكَ فَقَاتِلَا إِنَّا هَاهُنَا قَاعِدُونَ ﴿٢٤﴾

(5:24) ***They said: "O Moses! We shall never enter it at all so long as they remain therein; go therefore you and your Lord, then fight you both, surely we will here sit down."***

They repeated their refusal, "We shall never enter it," in order to make Moses lose all hope of their compliance, so that he should not go on telling them to enter.

This speech is full of derision, insult and contempt for Moses and the divine order and promise that he had conveyed to them. The sentences are set in an amazing way: They totally ignored the advice of the two men who had told them to obey Moses's order, as if they did not deserve any reply; then they told off Moses in a few words after they had talked with him in

the beginning to some length and given him their reason, etc. Resorting in argumentation to brevity after lengthy talk indicates that the speaker is tired of talking with his opposite party and does not like to hear his voice any more. Then they emphasized the repeated refusal, "We shall never enter it," with the word, "at all"; then their stupidity emboldened them to commit the most improper folly when they told Moses: "go therefore you and your Lord, then fight you both, surely we will here sit down." This speech very clearly proves that they thought, like Idol-worshippers, that God had a body like His creatures. And they were like this, for God quotes them as saying: *And We made the Children of Israel to pass the sea; then they came upon a people who kept to the worship of their idols. They said: "O Moses! Make for us a god as they have (their) gods." He said: "Surely you are a people acting ignorantly."* (7:138). To this day they have continued to believe in anthropomorphization and embodiment of God, as their books clearly show.

قَالَ رَبِّ إِنِّي لَا أَمْلِكُ إِلَّا نَفْسِي وَأَخِي ۖ فَافْرُقْ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَ الْقَوْمِ الْفَاسِقِينَ ﴿٢٥﴾

(5:25) *He said: "My Lord! Surely I have no control (upon any) but my own self and (so does) my brother; therefore make a separation between us and the nation of transgressors."*

The context shows that the clause: "Surely I have no control (upon any) but my own self and (so does) my brother," is an indirect declaration that he cannot make anyone accept his call except his own self and his brother. Obviously he could himself follow the divine command and call his brother, Aaron, to do so; his brother was, after all, a messenger prophet and was his successor in his life, he could not go against the divine commands. Another meaning: Moses had no control except on his own self, and likewise his brother had no control except on himself.

Moses did not mean that he had no power at all even in making someone to listen to his invitation to belief. Such an explanation does not agree with the context: Certainly there were the two men who feared and many others who believed in him and had accepted his call. What we should ponder upon is the fact that he had not included even his and his brother's families in the people under his control, while obviously they were not disobedient to him in any way.

This mystery is solved when we look at the context and the situation. Moses had called his people to a legitimate responsibility; he put all his efforts in it; but the Israeli society rejected his call in a very ignominious and repulsive manner. This situation demanded that he should say to God: 'O my Lord! I diligently conveyed your message to them, but in this affair I have no control on anyone except my own self, and so does my brother; we have discharged the responsibility put on our shoulders; but these people confronted us with total refusal. Now, we have lost hope concerning them and our path is blocked. Now, we pray to You to open this knot and with Your Lordship, pave the way for them to get your complete favor, that they may inherit the land and be made successors in it. O Lord! Decide and judge between these transgressors and us.'

They had in past disobeyed Moses on many occasions: in their demand to see the Lord, in worship of the calf, in entering the door saying *hittah*, etc. But this time they transgressed all limits; they openly rejected Moses's call in a very rude manner. If Moses had left them in their insolence, and remained silent on their flaunting his order, it would have been the end of his prophetic call; his orders and prohibitions would have lost their value and the society would have disintegrated, losing the unity which Moses had established with so much trouble.

The above statement shows that:

First: The situation demanded that Moses should mention his own condition and that of his brother while complaining to God, because these two were the conveyors of the divine message, and should not refer to other believers' condition (even though they were not insubordinate), because the others had no concern with *tablīgh* and mission. The context required description of the conveyor of the order, not of those who accepted the call, followed, and obeyed the divine commandment.

Second: The situation also demanded that Moses should turn to his Lord with this complaint, which in reality was a call to God to help him in enforcement of His command.

Third: The clause, "and my brother," is in conjunction with "I" in, "Surely I have no control," The meaning thus will be as follows: and my brother too, like me, has no control except on his own self. It is not in conjunction with, "my own self," which would imply that he had no control except on himself and on his brother, because it would not agree with context, although both connotations are correct in themselves. Moses and Aaron both had control on their own selves in obedience and compliance,

and Moses had control on Aaron that he would obey him (Moses), because he was Moses's successor in his life; likewise, both had control on sincere believers that they would listen to, and obey them.

Fourth: The sentence: 'therefore make a separation between us and the nation of transgressors." Moses does not invoke God against the Children of Israel that He should enforce on them His final judgement by sending punishment on them, or by separating Moses and Aaron from them (by removing them from there or by giving death to both brothers); Moses was calling them to what God had prescribed for them with completion of favor, and it was through him that God bestowed His blessings on the Israelites by delivering them and making them successors in land—all on his hands, as God says: *And We desired to bestow a favor upon those who were deemed weak in the land, and to make them the Imams, and to make them the heirs* (28:5). Also the Israelites were aware of the role of Moses in their lives, as God quotes them as saying: *They said: "We have been persecuted before you came to us and since you have come to us." He said: "It may be that your Lord will destroy your enemy and make you rulers in the land, then He will see how you act"* (7:129).

Another evidence may be found in the divine advice to Moses: *therefore do not grieve for the nation of transgressors* (5:26). It shows that Moses was afraid of divine punishment overtaking them, and not unexpectedly he would grieve for them when they were encircled in the wilderness.

قَالَ فَإِنَّهَا مُحَرَّمَةٌ عَلَيْهِمْ ۛ أَرْبَعِينَ سَنَةً ۛ يَتِيهُونَ فِي الْأَرْضِ ۚ فَلَا تَأْسَ عَلَى الْقَوْمِ الْفَاسِقِينَ ﴿٢٦﴾

(5:26) *He said: "So it shall surely be forbidden to them for forty years, they shall wander about in the land, therefore do not grieve for the nation of transgressors."*

The pronoun, "it," refer to the holy land. The forbidding implies divine creative decree to that effect; *al-Tīh* (wondering, wilderness); "in the land": "the" here refers to the land where they were at that time; "do not grieve": Moses is advised not to be sorry for them. God has confirmed here Moses's description of his people as "transgressors."

Meaning: The holy land, that is, entering and capturing it is forbidden to them, that is, We have decreed that they would not be able to enter it for forty years; they will wander in the land all those years—neither will they

be 'civilized' and dwell in a town, nor will they be 'bedouins' living a life of desert-dwellers; do not grieve for the nation of transgressors because of this chastisement, because they are transgressors, one should not be sorry for them when they are inflicted with retribution of their deeds.

Examining Narrations

(1) Ibn Abī Hātim has narrated from Abū Saʾīd al-Khudrī that the Messenger of God said: "The Children of Israel, if one of them had a servant, a riding animal and a woman he was written a king." (*al-Durr al-manthūr*)

(2) Abū Dāwūd has narrated in his *marāsīl*[1] from Zayd b. Aslam, in explanation of: *and made you kings*, that the Messenger of God said: "A wife, house and servant." (*ibid.*)

Author's comments: [al-Suyūtī] has narrated other traditions too of the same theme. But the verse's context does not agree with this explanation. Although it was possible that the Israelites used to call everyone having a house, woman and servant a king, or write him as king, yet obviously not all of them (even their servants!) fulfilled this condition and had houses, women and servants. Certainly, only some of them were of that status, as is the case in other nations and generations; acquiring house, wives and servants is a worldwide custom and no nation is without houses, wives, and servants. Therefore, it was not something particularly bestowed on the Children of Israel, so that God should count it as a special favor to them that He made them kings—and the verse counts His special favors.

Probably awareness to this defect has led some narrators to say—as is narrated by Qatādah—that the Israelites were first to have servants! But history does not agree with it.

(3) al-Mufīd narrates through his chains through Abū Hamzah from Abū Jaʾfar that he said: "When Moses arrived with them near the holy land, he told them: *'Enter the holy land which Allah has prescribed for you and turn not on your backs, for then you will turn back losers.*' And God had certainly prescribed it for them. *They*

1 That is, *Marāsīl* is the plural of *mursal. al-Ahādīth al-Mursalah* means the traditions which one relates as on the authority of a *tābiʾī* (one next in the order of time after the *sahābah*) by tracing up the ascription thereof uninterruptedly to him; when the *tābiʾī* says, "The Messenger of God said, ..." without mentioning a *sahābī* who heard it from the Messenger of God. (Ed.)

said: 'Surely there is a strong race in it, and we will never enter it until they go out from it, so if they go out from it, then surely we will enter.' Two men of those who feared, upon both of whom Allah had bestowed a favor, said: 'Enter upon them by the gate, for when you have entered it you shall surely be victorious, and on Allah you should rely if you are believers.' They said: 'O Moses! We shall never enter it at all so long as they remain therein; go therefore you and your Lord, then fight you both, surely we will here sit down.' He said: 'My Lord! Surely I have no control (upon any) but my own self and (so does) my brother; therefore make a separation between us and the nation of transgressors.' So, when they refused to enter it God made it forbidden to them, and they kept wandering within about four parasang for forty years, wandering in the land; *therefore do not grieve for the nation of transgressors*."

Abū ʿAbdillāh said: "When evening came, their crier called: 'Departure', so they set out with chanting and songs; until came the dawn, and God ordered the land to turn round with them, and in the morning they found themselves in the place which they had started from, then they said (to one another): 'Certainly you lost the way.' They remained in this (punishment) for forty years; and manna and quails were sent down to them; until all of them had died except two persons, Joshua son of Nun and Caleb son of Yuqina as well as the children of the (first generation). They kept wandering within for about four parasang. When they wanted to go from there, their clothes and socks dried up upon them." He said: "They had with them a rock; when they came down, Moses hit on it with his staff and there gushed out twelve streams from it, one stream for each tribe; and when they departed, the water returned to the rock and it was put on an animal ... " (*al-Amālī*, al-Mufīd)

Author's comments: There are so many traditions of nearly the same meaning narrated through Shīʾah and Sunnī chains. The words, "Abū ʿAbdillāh said," indicate beginning of another tradition.

Although these traditions give such details about the wandering and other matters that are not expressly supported by the verses, yet they do not contain anything, which might be considered against the Book. Actually the affairs of Israelites in the time of Moses were amazing, and their life was surrounded on all sides by supernatural happenings; therefore, there

is nothing wrong if their wandering had the features mentioned in the traditions.

(4) Masadah b. Sadaqah narrates from Abū ʿAbdillāh that he was asked about the words: *enter the holy land which Allah has prescribed for you*; he said. "He wrote it for them, then erased it, then wrote it for their children; so they (the children) entered it; *Allah erases what He pleases, and establishes (likewise), and with Him is the basis of the Book* [13:39]." (*al-Tafsīr*, al-ʿAyyāshī)

Author's comments: This theme has been narrated also by Ismāʾīl al-Juʿfī from Abū ʿAbdillāh, and by Zurārah, Humrān and Muḥammad b. Muslim from Abū Jaʿfar. The Imam has looked at the generation which received from Moses the order to enter the land with assurance that it was prescribed for them and at the generation which actually entered it; this resulted in *al-badāʾ* regarding the generation prescribed for. It does not go against the apparent context of the verse, which shows that those who were prescribed for had entered the land; it was forbidden to them for forty years, then they entered it. In fact, the order was given to the Israeli society collectively; thus the same people entered it for whom it was prescribed, because all were one nation and one society. It was prescribed to that society to enter, then it was forbidden for a time, then they succeeded in entering. In this light, there was no *badāʾ*, although looking at the particular people there certainly was *badāʾ*.

(5) [al-Kulaynī] has narrated through his chains from ʿAbd al-Rahmān b. Yazīd that Abū ʿAbdillāh, said: "The Messenger of God, said: 'The Prophet David died on Saturday morning, so the birds overshadowed him with their wings, and Moses (*Kalīmullāh*)[1] died in wilderness, so a crier announced from the sky: "Moses has died, and which soul would not die?"'" (*al-Kāfī*)

almizan.org

1 The Prophet whom God spoke to. (Ed.)

Verses 27–32

The verses describe the story of the two sons of Adam, and make it clear that envy sometimes drives son of Adam to a stage where he slays his brother unjustly, then he becomes a loser and he regrets when no remorse can do any good. In this sense, the verses are conjoined with preceding ones, which describe how the Children of Israel had an aversion to believing in the Messenger of God; their rejection of the true call had no reason except envy and transgression. Thus does envy pushes man to slaughter of his brother, then throws him in a remorse and regret from which he can never be free; so they should take lesson from this story, and should not persist so much in envy and then disbelief.

وَاتْلُ عَلَيْهِمْ نَبَأَ ابْنَيْ آدَمَ بِالْحَقِّ إِذْ قَرَّبَا قُرْبَانًا فَتُقُبِّلَ مِنْ أَحَدِهِمَا وَلَمْ يُتَقَبَّلْ مِنَ الْآخَرِ قَالَ لَأَقْتُلَنَّكَ ۖ قَالَ إِنَّمَا يَتَقَبَّلُ اللَّهُ مِنَ الْمُتَّقِينَ ﴿٢٧﴾

(5:27) ***And relate to them the story of the two sons of Adam with truth when they both offered an offering, but it was accepted from one of them and was not accepted from the other. He said: "I will most certainly slay you." (The other) said: "Allah only accepts from those who are pious.***

Watlu (translated here as: "And relate") has its root in *al-Tilāwah* (to read, to recite), which in its turn is derived from *al-Tulūw* (to follow); because a relater describes a news or story in stages one after another; *al-nabāʾ* (news which has some benefit); *al-qurbān* (offering with which one wants to come nearer to God or someone else), it is an infinitive verb/gerund, it has no dual or plural form; *al-Taqabbul* (to accept with more care accorded to the accepted thing). The pronoun, "them," (in, "relate to them") refers to the People of the Book, because the speech concerns them.

"Adam" refers to the same person whom Qur'an introduces as the progenitor of the mankind. An exegete has said, "It refers to an Israelite who had two sons who quarrelled regarding an offering, and one of them, called Qābīl (Cain), killed Hābil (Abel); and that is why God says at the end of the story: *For this reason did We prescribe to the Children of Israel*

..." But it is wrong, because:

First: Qur'an has nowhere mentioned any other Adam except the one who was the progenitor of mankind. If someone else were the subject of this verse, it was necessary to place here some indication, in order to remove any confusion.

Second: Some details of the story, example, sending of a crow, conforms with the condition of the primitive man who possessed simple thoughts and rudimentary perceptions, who gradually went on accumulating informations through experiences which he got from incident to incident. The verse clearly shows that the killer did not even know that a dead body could be covered in the earth. Obviously, this characteristic fits on the son of Adam, the progenitor of mankind, not on a person from the Children of Israel, who were civilized, advanced, and nationally refined in culture; and such matters could not be unknown to them.

Third: This exegete, by saying that "and that is why God says at the end of the story*: For this reason did We prescribe to the Children of Israel*," wants to reply to a question levelled against the verse. That question says: "Why the said prescription was reserved particularly to the Children of Israel, while the moral of the story covers the whole humanity—that whoever kills a person it is as though he killed all men, and whoever kept alive one person it is as though he kept alive all men."

So the said exegete tried to reply that the killer and the killed were not sons of Adam who was progenitor of mankind, and this story was not among the initial events taking place at the dawn of humanity, so that it could provide a lesson to all succeeding generations. Rather this event had concerned two sons of an Israelite, and the story describes an Israeli incident, which had a particularly national character; and that is why its lesson was especially confined to the Children of Israel.

However, this reply does not settle the argument; the question even now remains unanswered. The principle that killing one man is tantamount to killing all men and keeping one person alive is like keeping all men alive, is applicable to all killings taking place in human species; it is not reserved to any particular killing; and innumerable murders had taken place before the era of Israelites and even in Israelites before the one mentioned in this verse. Then why was this principle enunciated from this particular murder? And why was it confined to a particular nation?

Moreover, if the matter were as he says, it was better to say, ... that whoever "among you" slays a soul, so that it would have been reserved for

them, and in that case the same question would arise as to that reservation; and the notion in itself was not sound.

The reply to original question is as follows: The words: *whoever slays a soul ... it is as though he slew all men; and whoever keeps it alive, it is as though he kept alive all men*, do not enact a legislative order; they enunciate a deep principle. Therefore, the prescription to the Children of Israel denotes that this principle was explained to them, although its benefit was comprehensive and covered Israelites and non-Israelites both. It is not unlike the admonitions and wisdom the Qur'an explains to the *ummah* of Muḥammad although their benefits are not confined to it.

Why does this verse say that this maxim was prescribed to the Israelites? It is because the verses are concerned with admonishing them, reminding them and rebuking them for their envy and jealousy against the Prophet; their intense hatred of the Prophet led them to fanning the fire of mischief, instigating others to fight the Muslims and active participation in many such wars. That is why this speech is followed by the words: *and certainly Our messengers came to them with clear proofs, but even after that many of them certainly act extravagantly in the land.*

Add to all this fact that the story as mentioned by that exegete has no basis at all—neither in tradition nor in history.

Now, it is clear that "the story of the two sons of Adam" is related to the sons of that Adam who was the Father of mankind. The clause: "with truth" is related either to "the story" or to "relate"; in either case it is a notice or declaration that the story as was prevalent in their society was not free from distortion and omission. Actually the story as presented in the *Genesis* (Ch.4) does not mention the event of the crow and its digging up the earth; also it clearly presents God as having a body—Far exalted be He from such things!

The context of the clause: "when they both offered an offering, but it was accepted from one of them and was not accepted from the other," obviously shows that each of the two had offered an offering to God; but the word, *al-qurbān* (offering) was used in singular number, because, as mentioned earlier, it being a *masdar*, does not accept dual or plural form.

The clauses: "He said: 'I will most certainly slay you.' He (the other) said: 'God only accepts from those who are pious.'" The first speaker is the killer and the second, the killed one. It shows that they both knew that the offering of one was accepted and of the other rejected. But the verse does not say as to how they came to know it or which evidence led them

to that deduction.

However, the Qur'an in another place mentions that among the ancient nations, or particularly among the Israelites, customarily the acceptance of an offering was known through its consumption by fire. God says: (Those are they) *who said: "Surely Allah has enjoined us that we should not believe in any messenger until he brings us an offering which the fire consumes." Say: "Indeed, there came to you messengers before me with clear proofs and with that which you said; why then did you kill them if you are truthful?"* (3:183).

Offerings are well known among the People of the Book till today.[1] Possibly in this case too the same method was used to indicate the offering's acceptance—especially keeping in view that the story was narrated to the People of the Book who believed in that method. Be it as it may, the killer and his victim both knew that the one's offering was accepted and that of the other rejected.

Obviously, the one who said, "'I will most certainly slay you,'" was that brother whose offering was not accepted; and he thus spoke only because of envy and jealousy, as there was no other reason, nor the victim had committed any crime by his own will and power so that he should be confronted with such talk and threatened to be murdered. The killer threatened: "'I will most certainly slay you,'" merely because of envy that the victim's offering was accepted and the killer's rejected. The victim replied: "'God only accepts from those who are pious. If you will stretch forth your hand towards me to slay me, I am not one to stretch forth my hand towards you to slay you; surely I fear God, the Lord of the worlds.'" By this reply he made it clear that:

First: He (the victim) had nothing to do with the acceptance or non-acceptance of any offering, nor had he committed any crime. If anyone was to be blamed, it was the killer who did not fear God, and consequently God refused to accept his offering.

Second: If the killer wanted to kill him and stretched his hand toward the victim for that purpose, the victim was not going to stretch his hand towards him with intention of killing him. Why? Because of his piety and fear of God. In this situation, the killer would return (in the next world)

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1 Offerings among the Jews are of various types: slaughtering an animal for sacrifice, presenting flour, oil, frankincense, and first fruits. Among the Christians, it is the bread and wine taken at the Eucharist, which according to their belief, reallyturns into Christ's flesh and blood. (Auth.)

with the victim's sin and his own, so that he would be among the inmates of the Fire, and that is the recompense of the unjust.

"God only accepts from those who are pious." It asserts that acceptance is reserved only for the offering of the pious—it excludes that of not pious. Or, perhaps the killer arrogantly or ignorantly was thinking that his own offering would be accepted and that of the victim rejected—thinking that it does not depend on piety; or that God did not know the real position and probably He would be confused as human beings become sometimes; therefore it was established that the killer's offering was not acceptable at all.

This episode contains many important principles: It describes how and when acts of worship and offerings are accepted; admonishes about murder, injustice and envy emphasizing their seriousness; confirms the system of divine retribution and shows that it is an integral part of the Lordship of the Lord of the worlds, for, Lordship cannot be complete without a well organized system interlinking various parts of the world, which would lead to just evaluation of deeds, and would recompense injustice with painful chastisement; so that the oppressor should desist from oppression, or should receive the retribution which he had arranged for himself, and that is the Fire.

لَئِنْ بَسَطْتَ إِلَيَّ يَدَكَ لِتَقْتُلَنِي مَا أَنَا بِبَاسِطٍ يَدِيَ إِلَيْكَ لِأَقْتُلَكَ ۖ إِنِّي أَخَافُ اللَّهَ رَبَّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٢٨﴾

(5:28) ***If you will stretch forth your hand towards me to slay me, I am not one to stretch forth my hand towards you to slay you; surely I fear Allah, the Lord of the worlds."***

The preposition, "l" in *lain* (if) is for oath; stretching forth the hand alludes to preparing for murder and making its arrangements; the reply to this conditional clause begins with a negative connected to a nominal clause: "not one to stretch my hand"—in original Arabic, it is not a verb but an adjective, the negative is strengthened with '*bi*' and the whole speech with the earlier mentioned oath. All these devices were used to show that the victim was far removed from intention of killing his brother; such thought had never come to his mind.

This claim of his innocence is emphasized by the clause: "'surely I fear God, the Lord of the worlds.'" When the pious ones, those who fear

God, remember their Lord, God, the Lord of the worlds, Who, they know, recompenses every sin with its prescribed punishment, the fear of God is awakened in them, and it does not allow them to commit any injustice which would throw them into perdition.

Then comes the reality of this sentence: "'If you will stretch forth your hand towards me ...' ," and its true interpretation. In short, the events had reached a point where the victim had only two alternatives before him: Either he should kill his brother or his brother kills him; if he opts for the first alternative then he would become unjust oppressor, would carry sins of both on his shoulders and would enter the Fire; if on the other hand his unjust brother kills him all the above consequences would come to that brother. Obviously, the victim did not opt for the first alternative because in that case his own felicity would be jeopardized; he rather opted for the second alternative—that his unjust brother should suffer infelicity by killing him while he himself attains felicity without being unjust or oppressor. Thus, in the clause: "'Surely I wish that you should bear my sin ...' ," the word, "wish," denotes option in case of there being two alternatives.

This verse gives the interpretation of the clause: "'If you will stretch forth your hand ... '" in the same way as had happened in the story of Moses and his companion when the latter had killed a boy they had met; Moses objected saying: *"Have you slain an innocent person otherwise than for manslaughter? Certainly you have done a horrible thing"* (18:74). His companion later gave him its interpretation in these words: *"And as for the boy, his parents were believers and we feared lest he should oppress them by disobedience (to them) and disbelief (in God). So we desired that their Lord might give them in his place one better than him in purity and nearer to having compassion"* (18:80–81).

Likewise, in this case, the victim "wished" that is, he opted for death joined with his felicity even if it resulted in his brother's infelicity as he had wrongly preferred life joined with infelicity which pushed him into the band of oppressors; exactly as the companion of Moses preferred the boy's death in felicity (although it would cause grief and sorrow to his parents) over his continued life which would make him oppressor and disbeliever who would go astray and lead his parents into error; and he desired that God would give them in his place another boy better than him in purity and nearer to having compassion.

The son of Adam who was murdered was pious and God fearing and had gnosis of God. His piety is shown in his reply: "God only accepts

from those who are pious." It contains the claim of his own piety, and God has quoted it without rebutting it. As for his knowledge and gnosis, it is inferred from his speech, *surely I fear God, the Lord of the worlds*. Here he openly claims that he feared God, and God has again quoted him without rebuttal; and God says in another place: ... *verily fear Allah only those of His servants endued with knowledge* ... (35:28). So when God endorsed his claim that he feared God, it was as though He also confirmed that he was a man of knowledge, as He has also portrayed the Moses's companion as a knowledgeable person and said: ... *and whom We had taught knowledge from Ourselves* (18:65). The victim's talk with his unjust brother is enough to show the extent of his knowledge; you will find in it deep sagacity, wisdom and good sermon. He showed with his clean disposition and pure nature that human race was bound to multiply, and their bands would contain individuals of diverse characters, some would be pious, others unjust and transgressors. However, there is one Lord Who is their Owner and the Owner of all the worlds and He manages their affairs. It is an aspect of His perfect management that He likes and loves justice and beneficence, dislikes and hates injustice and transgression. It follows that man must fear God and acquire piety—and this is religion. There are acts of obedience that bring man nearer to God, as there are acts of disobedience and injustice. Obedience is accepted when it springs from piety. Disobedience and injustice are sins the burden of which lies on the shoulders of the sinner. All this makes it clear that there should be another life—the resurrection—where everyone would be recompensed for his deeds, and the recompense of unjust and oppressors is the Fire.

As you see, these are the roots of the religious gnosis, confluence of the knowledge of genesis and resurrection, which this good servant of God explained to his foolish brother who did not even know that a thing could be hidden from people by burying it in the earth—until he learned it from the crow. The victim, however, did not say to his threatening brother: If you want to kill me I'll throw myself before you without defending myself or repulsing your attack; he had only said: "I am not going to kill you." Nor did he say: 'I wish to be killed by you anyhow, so that you will become an oppressor and will go to the Fire.' To cause someone to go astray and fall into disgrace is in itself an injustice and error; and it is the verdict of natural law, not confined to one shariah or the other. He only said: "If you stretch forth your hand towards me to kill me, I shall accept it and opt for it."

Keep in mind this fine point; and then listen to this objection on this event: "No doubt the killer went beyond the limit through his oppression and transgression; but the victim too fell short in his duty by not standing up to the killer and by accepting the oppression; instead of boldly facing the adversary and defending himself, he meekly submitted to the killer and said: 'If you will stretch forth your hand towards me to slay me, I am not one to stretch forth my hand towards you to slay you; ...'"

You will realize that this objection is baseless. He had not said, "I shall not defend myself and shall let you do whatever you want to do with me;" he had only said, "I do not wish to kill you." The verse does not say that he was killed and knowingly did not defend himself. May be, he was waylaid or ambushed, or was killed while defending or protecting himself.

Someone has looked at this episode in a wrong perspective, saying: The victim intended to give his brother power over himself, so that he would kill him, and thus fall into eternal perdition, while he (the victim) would get felicity and bliss, as he himself had said: *"Surely I wish that you should bear my sin as well as your sin, and so you would be of the inmates of the Fire."* As in these days, some ascetics think that they should adhere to their acts of worship and denial of self; if someone oppresses him or does injustice to him, that unjust oppressor would himself bear the burden of his oppression and injustice, and the victim should not stand up to defend his right, rather he should bear it patiently hoping to get its reward from God. But it is nothing but stupidity, because it is helping the sinner in his sin, and it makes both the helper and the helped partners in sin, so it will not make the oppressor to bear the burden of sins of both alone.

However, the explanation we have written above, of the words: *Surely I wish that you should bear my sin as well as your sin ...*, clarifies this objection. Some people have replied to the above-mentioned two objections with some absurd answers; there is no benefit in mentioning them.

إِنِّي أُرِيدُ أَنْ تَبُوءَ بِإِثْمِي وَإِثْمِكَ فَتَكُونَ مِنْ أَصْحَابِ النَّارِ ۚ وَذَٰلِكَ جَزَاءُ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٢٩﴾

(5:29) *"Surely I wish that you should bear my sin as well as your own sin, and so you would be of the inmates of the Fire, and this is the recompense of the unjust."*

Tabūa translated here as "bear" literally means, stay; that is, you should

stay with my sin. al-Rāghib has said:

> *"al-Bawā'* actually means equality of parts in a place, in contrast to *al-nabwah* that is, disagreement of parts; they say: a *bawwā'* (agreeable) place, when it is not repulsive; also they say: 'I *bawwa'tu lahu* (prepared for him) a place ...' And the Qur'an says: *Surely I wish that you should bear with my sin as well as your own sin*; a poet has said: "*I rejected her falsity and stayed with her right.*"

Therefore, its explanation with "return" looks at its inseparable connotation.

The clause: "'that you should bear my sin as well as your sin,'" denotes that the sin of unjustly murdered person is transferred to his killer, thus he shall bear two sins while the victim will come to God without any sin in his account. This is the apparent meaning of this clause and traditions support it; also reason justifies it. This topic has been discussed to a certain extent in the second volume of this book.[1]

Objection: This theory compels us to admit that a person may be held responsible for another man's sin; but reason rejects it, and God has said: *That no bearer of burden shall bear the burden of another* (53:38).

Reply: This matter is not within the purview of theoretical wisdom (so that reason could declare that it was impossible); rather it is within the jurisdiction of practical wisdom that follows the changing pattern of human social order and its exigencies. It is quite in order if the society lays the burden of one person's deed on another person, and considers the latter responsible for it; or if it decides that the deed done by a man was not done by him. For example, someone kills a man and the society had some rights upon the murdered man; now the society is justified in demanding those due rights from the killer. Likewise, if someone rebels against the society and creates disturbance in law, order, and mischief in the land, then the society has the right to consider all his good points as if they did not exist at all. And so on.

In the above-mentioned examples, the society looks at the bad deeds of the oppressed and puts them in the account of the oppressor. At this juncture, that bearer of burden bears the burden of the deeds which are now assigned to him—now it is not someone else's load; it is now transferred to his account because he had committed injustice to his victim, and in lieu of that injustice the victim's bad deeds have come to his door.

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1 *al-Mīzān* (Eng.), vol. 4. (Trans.)

It is not unlike a business transaction when the seller gives the goods to the buyer and accepts a price in its place; now the new owner of the goods uses it as he likes, and nobody would object to it simply because at one time it had belonged to someone else—because now the previous ownership has ceased. In the same way, the verse: *That no bearer of burden shall bear the burden of another*, cannot prevent the killer being charged with sins that were committed by the murdered man in his life, because now they have been transferred to the killer's account, and the previous responsibility of the murdered man is no more operative. It does not mean that the verse: *That no bearer of burden* ..., has lost its validity or effect because a new reason has caused its transfer to a new doer; it is like the *hadīth*, "A Muslim's property is not lawful to another except with his pleasure"; if the previous owner sells the property, he will lose all rights in it as his rights have been transferred. But no one can say that the above-mentioned *hadīth* has lost its validity or effect.

An exegete has written: The words: my sin as well as your own sin, mean 'the sin of my murder if you did it, and your sins which you had previously committed.' It is narrated from Ibn Masʾūd, Ibn ʿAbbās and others. Another interpretation: 'the sin of my murder and your previous sin because of which your offering was not accepted.' It has been narrated from al-Jubbāʾī and al-Zajjāj. A third explanation: 'the sin of my murder and your sin of slaying the whole mankind.' It has been narrated from others.

But all these interpretations are devoid of support from the wordings of the Qur'an, and reason too does not agree with them. Moreover, if any of these interpretations were correct, there was no reason to put both sins side by side—when both were committed by the killer—and then ascribe one to the victim and the other to the killer.

فَطَوَّعَتْ لَهُ نَفْسُهُ قَتْلَ أَخِيهِ فَقَتَلَهُ فَأَصْبَحَ مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ ﴿٣٠﴾

(5:30) ***Then his mind facilitated to him the slaying of his brother, so he slew him; then he became one of the losers.***

al-Rāghib says:

> "*al-Tawʾ* means obedience; its opposite is *al-kurh* (dislike). *al-Tāʾah* synonymous to *al-Tawʾ*, but it is mostly used for obeying an order and displaying a drawing. The [Qur'anic] clause, *fa-tawwaʾat lahu nafsuhu*, means his mind allowed him and seduced him; *tawwaʾat*

used in the verse is more appropriate here than simple *atāʾat* (obeyed); the Qur'anic clause is opposite to *taʾbbat ʿan nafsuhu kadhā* (his mind declined it)."

It does not mean that *tawwaʾat* includes the connotation of obedience and seduction. It actually means that *al-Tatwīʾ* (*masdar* of *tawwaʾat*) indicates graduality, while *al-itāʾah* indicates promptness, and it is the usual difference between the stems of *ifʾāl* and *tafʾīl*. *Tawwaʾat*, used in the verse, therefore, implies that he was gradually pushed towards that deed through insinuations and temptations coming successively one after another, until he submitted to it and obeyed. Meaning: His mind submitted to that evil plan and he gradually succumbed to the temptation to kill his brother. The phrase: "slaying of his brother," stands for "the order of slaying of his brother."

Sometimes it is said that *tawwaʾat* here means, 'made attractive'; in that case, slaying of his brother will be its object—that is, his mind made slaying of his brother attractive to him. Another explanation: *tawwaʾat* means 'his mind acceded to him in slaying of his brother'; in this case *qatla* is given the vowel *a* in place of *i* because the preposition, *fī* (in) has been omitted.

Someone has inferred from the phrase: *fa-asbaha* (became one of the losers) that he had slew his brother at night [because *asbaha* literally means entered upon morning]. But this is not correct, because although literally it gives this meaning, but Arabs generally use it in the meaning of "became" without looking at its root or time. Even in the Qur'an there are several sentences where time factor is not relevant at all. For example: ... *so by His favor you became brethren;* ... (3:103). *so that they shall be regretting on account of what they hid in their souls* (5:52). Hence there is no way of taking the above phrase in its literal sense.

فَبَعَثَ اللَّهُ غُرَابًا يَبْحَثُ فِي الْأَرْضِ لِيُرِيَهُ كَيْفَ يُوَارِي سَوْءَةَ أَخِيهِ ۚ قَالَ يَا وَيْلَتَا أَعَجَزْتُ أَنْ أَكُونَ مِثْلَ هَٰذَا الْغُرَابِ فَأُوَارِيَ سَوْءَةَ أَخِي ۖ فَأَصْبَحَ مِنَ النَّادِمِينَ ﴿٣١﴾

(5:31) ***Then Allah sent a crow digging up the earth so that he might show him how he should cover the dead body of his brother. He said: "Woe me! Do I lack the strength that I should be like this crow and cover the dead body of my brother?" So he became of***

those who regret.

al-Bahth (means searching for something in the earth; then it is said: 'I thoroughly searched' [that is, made research] about this matter. This meaning is given in *Majmaʾ al-bayan*. *al-Muwārāt* (to hide); from this root come *al-Tawārī* (to hide oneself) and *al-warāʾ* (behind). *al-Saw Majmaʾ al-bayan ah* (what makes one annoyed, displeased); *al-wayl* (woe, perdition), *ya waylata* (exclamatory expression used for disaster, perilous situation); *al-ʾajz* (weakness; opposite of power).

The context shows that the killer had spent a considerable time in bewilderment and perplexity; while he was wary lest others come to know of his deed; he could not understand what device to use in order to hide the dead body of his brother; this continued until God sent the crow. If the sending of the crow and his digging the earth had occurred close together with his slaying of his brother, he would not have lamented in these words: "'Woe me! Do I lack the strength that I should be like this crow and cover the dead body of my brother?'"

Also it appears from the context that the crow had buried something in the earth after digging it; clearly it wanted to demonstrate the method of burial, not the way of digging. Mere digging could not teach him how to bury the dead body, because he was so simple minded that he did not understand the purpose of digging; how could he go ahead from digging to burial as the two things are not concomitant. His mind perceived the method of burial when he saw the crow digging the earth and burying something in it.

Among the birds, the crow has a habit of storing for future use a part of what he obtains through preying [or lifting away] by burying it in the earth. Although other birds which feed on grain, etc. sometimes dig the earth, but their purpose is to find out things like grain and worms, not to bury and store.

The pronoun, "he" in "so that he might show him," stands for the crow, as it is the nearest noun. Some people have claimed that it refers to "God"; this too may be correct, but it seems a bit farfetched; however, meaning is correct in both cases.

The words: "He said: 'Woe me! Do I lack the strength that I should be like this crow' ," were uttered by the killer when he realized how easy was the method used by the crow to bury something. He found that he too was able to do as the crow had done and bury the dead body—now he had

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seen the connection between digging and burial. Then he felt remorse for not thinking about it himself, so that he could understand that digging the earth was the easiest means of hiding the body. So he expressed his regret: "Woe me! Do I lack the strength that I should be like this crow and cover the dead body of my brother?" It was a sort of a soliloquy between him and his mind in the style of a question implying negation. It is as though he was questioned—implying negation: 'Did you lack the strength to be like this crow and cover the dead body of your brother?' The reply would be: 'No.' Then he would be asked second question in the same style: 'Then why did you remain oblivious to it? Why did you not resort to this method although it was so obvious, and put yourself in such trouble without any reason for such a long period?' There was no answer to it. And this caused the remorse. Remorse is a psychological emotion, a mental agony that particularly affects a human being when he realizes that he has neglected some means, which have led to loss of a benefit or appearance of a loss. You may say that it is a feeling that affects man when he remembers that he has neglected making use of a possibility.

This is the condition of man, when he commits an injustice or oppression, which he does not want people to know about. Such deeds and behavior are not acceptable to the society with its well-laid system whose parts are interlinked. The effects of such anti-social deeds are bound to appear before public eyes, even if they remain hidden in the beginning. The unjust criminal wants to compel the society to accept his crime, but it does not accept it at all. It is not unlike a man eating or drinking poison, wishing that his digestive system would digest it, but it does not digest it. And even if that injustice remains hidden in this life, there is a meeting place, which he cannot avoid, and your Lord is on watch. At this juncture man will know that his plans were defective and he did not properly observe what was required of him; then he will feel remorse. Even if he were given a second chance, he would damage some other parts. It would continue like that until God disgraces him before the whole world.

The above discussion makes it clear that the words: "So he became of those who regret," indicate his regret for not hiding and burying the dead body of his brother. Also it may possibly be said that the words show his regret for the slaying itself, and it is not wide of mark.

A Talk on Perception and Thought

The verse: *Then Allah sent a crow digging up the earth so that he might*

show him how he should cover the dead body of his brother. He said: "Woe me! Do I lack the strength that I should be like this crow and cover the dead body of my brother?" So he became of those who regret is a unique one; there is no other like it in the Qur'an. It portrays man's ability of benefiting from perception; that he acquires knowledge of characteristic properties of various things through perception, and then thinking on it arrives at its aims and objects in life. It is what has been discovered by academic research that human knowledge and cognition emanates from perception (or call it sensitivity), in contrast to those who believe in remembrance and natural knowledge. We may explain it as follows:

Look at a man with all his cognitive pictures—be it ideas or propositions, particular or general, whatever the characteristic of his knowledge and consciousness—you will find that he has got numerous pictures and a great deal of cognition, even if he be the most ignorant, and extremely weak in understanding and thinking; and no one can enumerate the pictures in his mind; in fact only God knows their limit.

Although it is beyond the limit of human computation, it is seen that it goes on growing and increasing so long as the man remains alive in this world. If we retreat and go back in human life, we shall find it decreasing and decreasing until it will become cipher, and man will become like a blank slate without any knowledge. God says: [God] *taught man what he knew not* (96:5).

The above verse does not mean that God taught him what he did not know; but as for the things he knew, he had no need of divine teaching. Obviously, human knowledge, of whatever type it may be, is needed to guide him to what will make his existence perfect and will benefit him in his life; the goal to which inorganic things proceed by natural laws, the organic ones—including man—proceed and are guided to it in the light of knowledge. Thus knowledge is guidance.

God has ascribed guidance to Himself, as He quotes Moses as saying: *"Our Lord is He Who gave to everything its creation, then guided."* (20:50). Again He says: *And Who made (things) according to a measure, then guided* (87:3). Also He says, and in a sense it points to guidance through perception and thought: *Or, Who guides you in utter darkness of the land and sea,...* (27:63). In previous volumes, we have discussed to a certain extent the meaning of guidance. In short, every knowledge is guidance; and every guidance is from God; therefore, whatever knowledge man has got, has come to him through divine teaching.

Also, the verse, *And Allah has brought you forth from the wombs of your mothers—you did not know anything—and He gave you the hearing and the sight and the hearts* ...(16:78), gives the connotation near to that of the verse: [God] *taught man what he knew not*.

Contemplation of man's condition and meditation on Qur'anic verses show that man's theoretical knowledge, that is knowledge of things' characteristics and the resulting intellectual cognition, all emanate from the senses, and God through it teaches him the things' characteristics, as is seen in the divine words: *Then Allah sent a crow digging up the earth so that he might show him how he should cover the dead body* ...

Attribution of sending the crow for showing how the dead body should be covered is exactly the attribution of teaching the way of covering to Him. The crow did not know that it was God Who had sent it; likewise, the son of Adam did not perceive that there was a planner who had arranged the matter for his thinking and learning; and the fact that apparently the crow and its digging had caused him to learn the way of burial, was merely a chance factor like all chance factors which teach man ways of his life in both worlds. However, it is God Who has created mankind and led him to perfection of knowledge for the goal of his life. The laid down system of creation is such as makes man seek perfection through knowledge, with continuous contacts and knocks between him and various parts of creation; and by this process man learns the means of acquiring his aims and objects. It is God Who sends the crow and other mediums to engage in some activity that helps man in his learnings; so He is the real teacher of man.

There are many similar expressions in the Qur'an. For example: ... *and what you have taught the beasts of prey, training them to hunt—you teach them of what Allah has taught you* ... (5:4); the verse counts what they have learnt and what they teach as part of what God has taught them, although they have learnt it from other people or found it out by themselves. Again: ... *and fear Allah; and Allah teaches you,* ... (2:282); but it was the Messenger of God who was teaching them. Also: ... *and the scribe should not refuse to write as Allah has taught him* (2:282); while the scribe had learnt the art of writing from another scribe. However, all these matters are an integral part of creation and management; and the resulting knowledge helps man in arriving at his perfection. Therefore, it is God who has taught him these means of perfection, as a teacher teaches through speech and training, and a scribe teaches others through speech and pen.

This is the way of all activities, which are attributed in this world of cause-and-effect to God. God is their creator, and there is a chain of causes between Him and His creatures, which are apparent causes like instruments and tools, which bring a thing into existence.

You may say that these causes are conditions on which a thing's existence depends—everything is covered from all sides by these causes. Zayd comes into this world; he is son of ʿAmr and Hind. Now, ʿAmr and Hind should have been born long before Zayd, and they should have united in marriage; only then the said Zayd could be born. Likewise, for seeing through a seeing eye, there should be a seeing eye before the sight.

Some people think that belief in oneness of God (monotheism) demands that one should totally negate chain of causes; only then one can establish God's absolute power and dismiss the idea of any weakness in him. They say that the idea of necessity of intermediary causes is tantamount to saying that God is compelled to use a particular way for creating things and has no free will or power. However, those people have inadvertently contradicted themselves.

In short, it is God Who has taught human beings characteristics of the things which are perceived by their senses; He has taught them through the senses; then made all that is in the earth and the sky subservient to them; He says: *And He has made subservient to you whatsoever is in the heavens and whatsoever is in the earth, all, from Himself;* (45:13)

This subjugation has a purpose behind it: Man by managing these things reaches his goals and attains to his wishes in life. God has made them connected to his existence so that he may benefit from them. The Creator has bestowed on man the faculty of contemplation in order that he may understand how to manage and use them, how to proceed ahead through them. The following verses points to this reality: *Do you not see that Allah has made subservient to you whatsoever is in the earth and the ships running in the sea by His command? ...* (22:65). *... and made for you of the ships and the cattle what you ride on* (43:12). *... and upon them* [the cattle] *and upon the ships you are borne* (40:80). There are many verses of similar connotation. Look at their language, how they ascribe making of ships to God, while they are manufactured by man; how they attribute carrying of man to God, while it is done by the ships and the cattle; how they assign the ships' movement to His order, while it takes place because of the flow of the river, winds or steam, etc. All these phenomena have been described as God's subjugating them to man, because his will has

some control on ships, cattle and in the earth and sky which pulls them to the desired goal.

In short, God has given man thinking power over the senses, so that he may use it as a means to reach the perfection appointed for him; he is helped by his intellectual cognition covering the creation, in other words, the theoretical knowledge.

God says: *... and He gave you the hearing and the sight and the hearts that you may give thanks*. (16:78)

As for the knowledge related to action, which guides man to what is to be done and what not to be done, it comes to man through divine inspiration [or call it, instinct] without the agency of the senses or theoretical intellect. God says: *And* [I swear by] *the soul and Him Who made it perfect, then He inspired it to understand what is wrong for it and right for it; he will indeed be successful who purifies it, and he will indeed fail who corrupts it* (91:7-10). *Then set your face upright for religion in natural devotion (to the truth), the nature made by Allah in which He has made men; there is no altering of Allah's creation; that is the right religion, ...* (30:30). In these verses God ascribes the knowledge of what should be done (that is, good deed) and what should not be done (that is, evil deed) to divine inspiration; and it is what is thrown into the heart.

So, whatever knowledge is gained by man is a divine guidance and through divine guidance. However, there is difference among various types of knowledge:

(1) As for the characteristics of things found outside human mind, God gives him their knowledge through the five senses;
(2) The general comprehensive intellectual knowledge is given by God and through His subjugation; the senses do not interfere in it, nor can man be able to dispense with it;
(3) The knowledge related to action, which is related to good or evil deed, and decides what is good for it and what is bad; this comes from divine inspiration, thrown into the heart, knocking on the nature's door.

This third type of knowledge, which in fact emanates from divine inspiration, can only succeed in doing its work and complete its effect if the second type is in order and has grown up with health and uprightness; as even intellect can only do its work properly if man is upright and firm in piety and on the natural religion. God says: *... and none do mind except those having understanding* (3:7). *... and none minds but he who turns (to*

Allah) again and again (40:13). *And We will turn their hearts and their sights, even as they did not believe in it the first time, ...* (6:110). *And who turns away from the religion of Abraham but he who makes himself a fool, ...* (2:130). That is, none discards the demands of nature except he whose understanding is defective, and therefore he treads on a wrong path.

Reason supports this concomitance between understanding and piety. If man's theoretical power becomes defective, and he does not perceive truth as truth or falsehood as falsehood, then how can he be inspired to adhere to that or avoid this? Look at someone who believes that there is no life after this world's life; obviously he would not be inspired to observe religious piety which is the best provision for the life hereafter.

Likewise, if a man's natural religion is perverted, and he does not acquire the provision of religious piety, then his inner powers which give rise to desire or anger, love or hate, etc. cannot remain moderate; and when these powers' balance is disturbed, the power of theoretical perception cannot discharge its functions properly.

As the Qur'anic statements aim at spreading the religious cognition and teaching the people useful knowledge, they tread the same path and stick to the above methods which it has prescribed for acquiring knowledge: (i) If the matter concerns particular items which have perceivable characteristics, it clearly appeals to the senses; for example, verses which contain phrases like, "have you not seen," "do they not see," "have you seen,""do you not then see?" (ii) If the topic covers rational generality—whether it is related to general physical matters, or is beyond this phenomenal world—then it pays full regard to understanding and reason, although it is beyond the jurisdiction of the senses and outside the circle of matter and materials. For example, most of the verses related to genesis and resurrection, which contain phrases like, "for a people who understand," "for a people who reflect," "for a people who remember, "for a people who understand," etc. (iii) As for practical propositions which touch upon good and evil, profit and loss in deed, or piety and impiety, they rely on divine inspiration and describe the things which make the person remember his inner inspiration; like the verses which contain such phrases as, "it is better for you," "his heart is surely sinful," "in both of them there is a great sin," "and sin and rebellion without justice," "surely God does not guide," etc. You should meditate on them.

Now, it is clear that the Qur'an demonstrates the error of materialists—those who rely on sense and experiment alone and reject pure rational

propositions in practical matters. We know that the first concern of the Qur'an is the topic of monotheism, and it is on foundation of monotheism that it builds all true cognition, which it explains and invites people to. There is no need to remind that monotheism is a topic which is the furthest removed from the senses, has the least connection with matter and is deeply related to the pure rational affair.

The Qur'an explains that this true cognition is a part of nature and creation. God says: *Then set your face upright for religion in natural devotion (to the truth), the nature made by Allah in which He has made men; there is no altering of Allah's creation* (30:30).

It means that human creation is such an origination as it results in these perceptions and cognition. What does alteration of a creation imply? That alteration itself would be another creation and origination. But if altering of general creation is taken to mean negation of actual function then it is beyond comprehension. Far be it from him to negate his natural knowledge and to tread in life on a totally different path. Those who deviate from natural orders do not negate the dictate of nature; they rather use it in a wrong way. Sometimes an archer misses the target; now the bow and arrow as well as other conditions of shooting are originally made and laid down for hitting the target, but mistake in using throws it into error. If knives, saws, augers, needles, and other such things are fitted wrongly in their machines, they will perform the same functions for which they have been made but in an undesired way. However, it will be impossible for them to deviate from their natural function and do some other work, e.g. a saw cannot do the work of needle by sewing clothes, and so on.

The above matters are clear for him who thinks over general arguments offered by those who oppose rational proofs. For example, they say: 'Pure rational proofs and syllogisms composed of such premises which are not based on perceptions of five senses, often throw one into error. Look, for instance, at irreconcilable disputes in pure rational matters. Therefore, one should not rely on them because they do not reassure mind.'

Also they argue for correctness of the way of senses and experiments in the following manner: Obviously, the senses are the tools through which we acquire the knowledge of the characteristics of various things. When we perceive a thing's effect in the framework of some particular conditions, and observe the same effects repeatedly appearing with the same conditions—without fail and without any discrepancy—then we become sure that the said effect was the characteristic of the said thing and that

it was not merely a matter of chance, because chance is not a permanent phenomenon.

Both these arguments have been offered to prove that one should compulsorily depend on perception and experiment, and should discard pure rational methods. But it is amusing to note that all the premises used therein are rational and outside the purview of perception and experiment. These people have used these rational premises for rebutting the use of these very premises. That is what we have earlier said that nature cannot be negated, although man errs in its use.

And more abominable than that is the use of experiment and test in evaluation of legislated rules and enacted laws; a law is made and enforced in public with the aim of testing its effect through statistics, etc.; if good results get the upper hand, the law is confirmed as a permanent one, otherwise it is set aside and replaced by another, and so on. The same is the case of making a law through analogy or discretional liking.[1]

The Qur'an negates all the above methods and proves that the laid down laws are natural and clear; general piety and impiety are academic and based on inspiration; and their details should be learnt from the side of revelation. God says: *And pursue not that of which you have not the knowledge*; ... (17:36); *and do not follow the footsteps of the Satan* ... (2:168). It names the laid down shariah as truth: ... *and He sent down with them the book with truth, so that it might judge between people in that in which they had differed;* ... (2:213). ... *and surely conjecture does not avail against the truth at all* (53:28). How can conjecture avail when by following it one puts oneself in danger of falling into untruth which is error? God says: ... *and what is there after the truth but error;* ... (10:32) ... *yet surely Allah does not guide him who leads astray,* (16:37). In other words, error cannot be a way to lead man to good and felicity. Whoever wants to reach truth through falsehood, achieve justice through injustice, do a good by means of evil, or acquire piety through impiety, he has certainly lost the way; he craves to get from the creation (which is the foundation of law and shariah) what it can never deliver. Had it ever been possible, this interchange would have happened in characteristics of opposite things, and one side of opposite would have served what the other side was supposed to do.

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1 As for analogy in *fiqh* and personal liking and what is termed as olfaction of jurisprudential knowledge, they are the signs for "discovery" of law, not for laying it down; and its discussion is related to the *usūlu 'l-fiqh*. (Auth.)

Likewise, the Qur'an negates the path of remembrance (which invalidates the procedure of thinking academics and dismisses the natural logic); and we have earlier discussed this topic in detail.

In the same way, the Qur'an forbids people to indulge in contemplation without accompaniment of fear of God. (We have talked briefly on this subject too.) That is why when Qur'an teaches the laws of religion, it follows that legislation with description of moral virtues and good characteristics, which in their turn awaken the instinct of piety in man, with which he is able to understand the law. Look for example the following verses: *And when you have divorced the women and they have ended their term (of waiting), then do not prevent them from marrying their husbands when they agree among themselves in a lawful manner; with this is admonished whosoever among you believes in Allah and the last day; this is more profitable and purer for you; and Allah knows while you do not know* (2:232). *And fight with them until there is no more mischief (disbelief), and religion be only for Allah; but if they desist, then there should be no hostility except against the oppressors* (2:193). *... and keep up prayer; surely prayer keeps (one) away from indecency and evil, and certainly the remembrance of Allah is the greatest, and Allah knows what you do* (29:45).

Commentary continues:

مِنْ أَجْلِ ذَٰلِكَ كَتَبْنَا عَلَىٰ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ أَنَّهُ مَنْ قَتَلَ نَفْسًا بِغَيْرِ نَفْسٍ أَوْ فَسَادٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ فَكَأَنَّمَا قَتَلَ النَّاسَ جَمِيعًا وَمَنْ أَحْيَاهَا فَكَأَنَّمَا أَحْيَا النَّاسَ جَمِيعًا ۚ وَلَقَدْ جَاءَتْهُمْ رُسُلُنَا بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ ثُمَّ إِنَّ كَثِيرًا مِنْهُمْ بَعْدَ ذَٰلِكَ فِي الْأَرْضِ لَمُسْرِفُونَ ﴿٣٢﴾

(5:32) *For this reason did We prescribe to the Children of Israel that whoever slays a soul, unless it be for manslaughter or for mischief in the land, it is as though he slew all men; and whoever keeps it alive, it is as though he kept alive all men; and certainly Our messengers came to them with clear proofs, but even after that many of them certainly act extravagantly in the land.*

Majmaʾ al-bayan says:

"*al-Ajl* literally means felony."

al-Rāghib says:

"*al-Ajl* is that felony (retribution of) which is feared immediately;

thus every *ajl* is a felony, but not every felony is *ajl*; it is said: 'I did it because of him.'"

Then it was used for describing the cause; it is said: 'I did it for this cause,' that is, this is the cause of my action. Probably its use for description of cause began in the context of felony and crime, as we say: 'Zayd did evil and for this crime [*ajl*] I punished him with hitting,'

That is, my hitting Zayd sprang from his crime which was his evil-doing, or from crime of his evil-doing; then it was used for general cause and reason, as for example, I visited you for the reason of my love to you, or because of my love to you.

The context apparently shows that the phrase, "For this reason," refers to the story of the two sons of Adam given in the preceding verses. That is, the occurrence of that distressing event was the reason of our prescribing to the Children of Israel this and this. Some people have said that this phrase is a part of the preceding sentence: *So he became of those who regret*; that is, this was the cause of his regretting. This in itself is not far-fetched, as we see in the verses 2:219–20: ... *Thus does Allah make clear to you the signs, that you may ponder* (219) *about this world and the hereafter. And they ask you concerning the orphans* ... But in that case the words: "We prescribed," would begin a new sentence, and the usual style of the Qur'an would demand a (*wa*) for recommencement of another sentence, as we have seen in the above-mentioned verse 2:220.

Why does this phrase refer to the story of the two sons of Adam? It is because the story shows that this human species by nature is entangled in desire and jealousy; thus he hates people for things that are beyond their power [that is, are gifted by God]. This jealousy for even ordinary things instigates him against divine decrees for negating the purpose of creation; it blinds him so that he kills another human being, even his own brother.

Individual men belong to a single species and have the same essence and reality. Each of them possesses [in miniature] the same humanity that is possessed by all others, and *vice versa*. God created so many individuals and multiplied the human race in order that this reality should survive, in view of the fact that individuals remain alive only for short periods; by this increase in population, new generations will replace the old, and the worship of God will continue. In this background, destroying an individual by murder is tantamount to doing mischief in creation and negating the divine aim of keeping the humanity alive through increased population and succeeding generations. To this fact the killed son of

Adam had pointed while talking to his brother: *"I am not one to stretch forth my hand towards you to slay you; surely I fear Allah, the Lord of the worlds."* Thus he indicated that slaying someone without genuine reason was tantamount to waging war against God's Lordship.

As the human nature is such that a trivial cause incites him to commit injustice and oppression, which in the long run, negates the laws given by the Lord and contradicts the purpose of creation of humanity in general; and as the Children of Israel were sunk in jealousy and envy, pride and haughtiness, pursuit of desire and rejection of truth—as the preceding verses have described and their narrated stories show—God explained to them the reality of this heinous oppression and its position in depth, and informed them that in His eyes slaying one man was equal to slaying all people, and conversely keeping one person alive was tantamount to keeping alive all of them.

The phrase: "We prescribed to the Children of Israel," does not indicate any laid down law, yet it is not without emphasis looking at its importance and approach; and it has effect in provoking the divine wrath in this world or the next.

In short, the verse means: As man, by nature, is pushed even by a trivial motive to commit this great oppression [that is, murder], and peculiar characteristics of the Children of Israel were well-known, We described to them the gravity of manslaughter, in order that they should desist from extravagance, and there came to them Our messengers with clear proofs, but even after that they certainly act extravagantly in the land.

The sentence: "whoever slays a soul, unless it be for man-slaughter or for mischief in the land, it is as though he slew all men." Here God has made exception of two categories of killing: (i) In punishment, that is, for retribution, as He says: *... retaliation is prescribed for you in the matter of the slain; ...* (2:178). (ii) In punishment of mischief in the land, as He says in the next verse: *The punishment of those who wage war against Allah and His messenger and strive to make mischief in the land is only this, that they should be killed or crucified or their hands and their feet should be cut off on opposite sides ...* (5:33).

The seriousness of killing is elaborated by the phrase: *it is as though he slew all men.* We have already explained that each individual man possesses the same reality and quiddity, which is found in all members of the species, this reality lives and dies with him. All human beings, be he an individual or the whole species, one man or a multitude, all are one in

this reality. Naturally, murdering one soul should be tantamount to killing the whole species. Conversely, keeping alive one man should be equal to keeping all men alive, as the verse says.

First Objection: This equalization leads to nullification of the main purpose of the verse. The verse aims at showing the seriousness and gravity of slaying a soul and its great sin and dire consequences. Obviously, the more men one kills the more serious and grave its consequences should be. If one slaying is made equal to slaying all men, then what would be said for a man who kills ten men? One victim's murder becomes equal to murdering all men; and the remaining nine victims are left without anything to compare with.

This objection cannot be removed by saying that: 'Killing ten persons is equal to ten times murdering all men; and killing all of them is equal to murdering all multiplied by the total number of all'; because it means multiplication of punishment number, and the text of the verse does not support it.

Moreover, the total is made of units each of which is equal to the total, which is again made of such units; and this computation is not going to end at any point, and such a total is meaningless, because it has no unit, and there is no total without unit.

Apart from that, God says: *... and whoever brings an evil deed, he shall not be recompensed but only with the like of it, ...* (6:160).

Second Objection: What is the meaning of saying that killing one person is equal to killing all? If this "all" includes this one person who is killed, it means that the said person is equal to a collection of himself and others taken together. But it is obviously impossible. If "killing all" connotes killing all persons accept this one, it means that whoever killed a man, it is as though he killed all men except this one. Obviously, it is a rotten claim that contradicts the purpose of speech, that is, elaboration of the extreme seriousness of this oppression. Moreover, the phrase: "it is as though he slew all men," is unconditional and without any exception; so it does not allow this hypothesis.

This objection cannot be cleared by saying that: 'The aim is to show equality as far as punishment is concerned, or in other words, multiplication of punishment or other such matters.' And it is clear.

The reply to both the above objections is this: The divine words: "whoever slays a soul, it is as though he slew all men," are an allusion to the fact that all men have one single reality, that is humanity in which all are united,

and one and all are equal in it; whoever attacks the humanity found in one of them, he attacks the humanity found in all of them. For example, there is water divided in numerous glasses; whoever drinks from one glass he drinks the water—and he desires the water because it is water—and what is found in all other glasses is no more than water; thus it is as though he has drunk from all glasses. Therefore, the above-mentioned sentence is an allusion in the form of a simile.

In this way both objections are removed, because those objections have treated it as a simple simile in which the factor of similarity intensifies when the number of a side of simile increases; obviously if in this case one is equalized with all the meaning will be disturbed and objection will arise, as if someone says: One of this group of people is like a lion, and one among them is like all in bravery and valor.

As for the sentence: "and whoever keeps it alive it is as though he kept alive all men," it will be explained in the same way as the preceding sentence was. Keeping alive alludes to what the sane persons would call giving life, like delivering a drowning person and freeing a captive. God in His Book has counted guiding to the truth as giving life, as He says: *Is he who was dead then We raised him to life and made for him a light by which he walks among the people, ...* (6:122). Therefore, one who guides a soul to the true faith has raised him to life.

The clause: "and certainly Our messengers came to them with clear proofs," is related to the beginning of the verse, that is, 'Certainly, Our messengers came to them warning them against murder and other related ways of making mischief in the land.' The next sentence: "but even after that many of them certainly act extravagantly in the land," completes the speech, and its addition gives the intended result of this talk—a clear idea that the Children of Israel were extravagant, persisting in their arrogance and impertinence. We certainly described to them the gravity of murder, and Our messengers came to them with proofs, explaining this and other related topics. They clearly described it to them and warned them of its consequences; even then they did not desist from their haughtiness and insolence. They certainly acted extravagantly in the past, and continue to do so even now.

Extravagance means going beyond the boundary and exceeding this limit in all activities, although it is mostly used in monetary context. God says: *And they who when they spend, are neither extravagant nor parsimonious, and (keep) between these the just mean* (25:67), as al-Rāghib has said.

Examining Narrations

(1) Hishām b. Sālim narrates through Habīb al-Sijistānī from Abū Jaʾfar that he said, "When the two sons of Adam offered (their) offerings, and it was accepted from one of them and was not accepted from the other; [the Imam] said, 'It was accepted from Hābīl and not accepted from Qābīl. Because of it he (Qābīl) was overcome by intense jealousy and he committed outrage against Hābīl. He was lying in wait for him, watching when he would be alone, until he got the better of him, away from Adam; so he attacked and killed him. A part of their story is what God has described in his Book concerning their talk before his killing ...'" (*al-Tafsīr*, al-ʿAyyāshī)

Author's comments: This is one of the best traditions narrated about this story. It is a lengthy tradition in which the Imam describes: the birth of Hibatullāh Shīth after this event, Adam's will for him; and continuation of will among the prophets. We shall write it in some appropriate place.

The tradition clearly shows that Qābīl assassinated Hābīl when Hābīl was unaware of it, and he did not submit himself to the killer's design, as it agrees with reason; and we have elaborated it in the preceding Commentary.

It should be noted that our traditions give the names of the two sons as Hābīl and Qābīl, while the prevalent Bible says: Abel (Hābīl) and Cain (Qābīl). But there is no authenticity in it, because the narration of the Torah ends on one person whose details are unknown, apart from the alterations in the Torah, which are widely known.

(2) al-Qummī narrates from his father, from al-Hasan b. Mahbūb, from Hishām b. Sālim, from Abū Hamzah al-Thumālī, from Thuwayr b. Abī Fākhitah that he said, "I heard ʿAlī b. al-Husayn, talking to some Qurayshites. He said, 'When the two sons of Adam offered (their) offering, one of them offered the fattest ram which he kept, and the other offered a bunch of ear of grain; so it was accepted from the owner of the ram—and he was Hābīl—and not accepted from the other one. Thus Qābīl was angry, and said to Hābīl, "*By Allah! I will most certainly slay you.*" Hābīl said, *"Allah only accepts from those who are pious. If you will stretch forth your hand towards me to slay me, I am not one to stretch forth my hand towards you to slay you; surely I fear Allah, the Lord of the*

worlds. Surely I wish that you should bear my sin as well as your own sin, and so you would be of the inmates of the Fire, and this is the recompense of the unjust." Then his mind facilitated to him the slaying of his brother; but he did not know how to kill him until Iblīs came and taught him, saying, "Put his head between two rocks, then crush it." So when he killed him, he did not know what should he do with him. Then came two crows, and they came forward fighting and combating with one another; so one of them killed his companion; then the survivor dug into the land with his claws and buried his companion in it. Qābīl said, *"Woe me! Do I lack the strength that I should be like this crow and cover the dead body of my brother? So he became of those who regret."* Then he dug for him a ditch and buried him into it; thus it became a custom to bury the dead bodies.

"'Thereafter Qābīl returned to his father, and he did not see Hābīl with him. Adam said to him, "Where have you left my son?" Qābīl told him, "Had you sent me as his guardian?" Adam said, "Come with me to the place of offering." And [Adam] had a fore boding of what Qābīl had done. When he arrived at the place of offering, Hābīl's murder became clear to him. Then Adam cursed the land that accepted Hābīl's blood [that is, drank the blood, leaving nothing above]; and Adam ordered that Qābīl be cursed, and Qābīl was called from the sky: "You are cursed as you killed your brother." It is for the above reason that the earth does not drink blood.

"'Then Adam returned, weeping for Hābīl forty days and nights. When he felt grief for him, he complained to God about it. So God revealed to him: "I am going to give you a male child who will be a replacement of Hābīl." Thus Hawwāʾ gave birth to a son, pure and blessed; when it was the seventh day, God revealed to him: "O Adam! This son is my gift to you; therefore you name him Hibatullāh [that is, God's gift]; so Adam gave him the name Hibatullāh.'" (*al-Tafsīr*, al-Qummī)

Author's comments: This is the most moderate of the traditions narrated about this story and the matters connected with it. Even so, it is not free of some confusion in the text; as it shows that Qābīl threatened Hābīl to kill him, and then he did not know how to kill him; it is an unimaginable idea, except if it is taken to mean that he was perplexed which method he should use to kill his brother, so Iblīs (may God curse him!) advised him

to crush his head with rock. There are other traditions, narrated through the Shīʾah and Sunnī chains, whose theme is nearer to this tradition.

It should be noted that many diverse traditions have been narrated about this event with astonishing themes, like:

The one that says that God took the ram of Hābīl, and kept it in the Garden for forty autumns, then offered it as Ishmael's ransom, so Abraham slaughtered it:

Or that which says that Hābīl surrendered himself to Qābīl's control and desisted from stretching forth his hand towards his brother;

Or that which says that when Qābīl killed his brother, God bound one of his legs to its thigh from the day of murder to the Day of Resurrection, and turned his face to right side, wherever he turns it turns; on him is a hedge of ice in winter, and a hedge of fire in summer; there are with him seven angels, when one of them goes, another one comes;

Or that which says that he is undergoing punishment in an island in sea; God has hanged him upside down, and he will remain in the same condition up to the Day of Resurrection;

Or that which says that Qābīl son of Adam hangs by his hair in core of the sun; it takes him with it in its circulation—in winter and summer—up to the Day of Resurrection; when that day comes. God will send him into the Fire;

Or that which says that the son of Adam, who killed his brother, was Qābīl who was born in the Garden;

Or that which says that when Adam came to know of the murder of Hābīl, he elegized him in a few lines of Arabic poem;

Or that which says that according to their shariah if someone intended to attack another person, the victim left him free to do whatever he wanted, without resistance.

In addition to other such traditions, most or all of these and other similar traditions are weak; they go against the dictates of reason, and the Book does not support them. Some of them are clearly forged; others are distorted, while many are the result of the narrators' mistake who tried to narrate them in their own words.

(3) Ibn Abī Shaybah narrates from ʿUmar that the Messenger of God said, "Does one of you lack the strength, if a man comes to him to slay him, to say like it?"—He said it pointing with one of his hands to the other—"Then he would be like the good one of the two sons of Adam; he would be in the Garden and his killer in the Fire. (*al-Durr al-manthūr*)

Author's comments: It is among the traditions describing civil strifes and trials. There are many others like it, and al-Suyūtī has narrated most of them in *al-Durr al-manthūr*. For example, the following one which he has quoted through al-Bayhaqī, from Abū Moses from the Prophet that he said: "Break your swords"—that is, during civil strife—"and cut your strings, and stay inside the houses, and be in it like the good one of the two sons of Adam."

Another tradition he has quoted through Ibn Jarīr and ʿAbdu al-Razzāq from al-Hasan that he said, "The Messenger of God said, 'Verily the two sons of Adam have been offered as an example for this *ummah;* so adhere to the good one of them.'" There are other narrations like them.

These traditions apparently are not consistent with correct consideration, which is supported by correct traditions, which command people to defend themselves and fight in support of truth. God has said: *And if two parties of the believers quarrel, make peace between them; but if one of them acts wrongfully towards the other, fight that which acts wrongly until it returns to Allah's command* (49:9).

Moreover, all of these traditions purport to explain the words of Hābīl in this story: *"If you will stretch forth your hand towards me to slay me, I am not one to stretch forth my hand towards you to slay you,"* and try to show that Hābīl gave his brother power over himself enabling him to kill him without any attempt to defend himself. And you have seen that this idea is not in conformity with the Qur'anic text.

Apart from that, what makes one suspicious of these traditions is the fact that they have been narrated by people who sat during turmoils that led to ʿUthmān's murder, and during ʿAlī's reign they joined Muʾāwiyah, the Khārijites and Talhah and al-Zubayr. Therefore, it is necessary to interpret them in a sensible way if possible, failing which they should be discarded.

(4) Ibn ʿAsākir has narrated from ʿAlī that the Prophet said, "There is a mountain in Damascus, called Qāsiyūn; son of Adam killed his brother in it." (*ibid.*)

Author's comments: There is no objection to this tradition. However, Ibn ʿAsākir has narrated through one chain from Kaʾb al-Ahbār that he said, "The blood, which is on the mountain of Qāsiyūn, is that of the son of Adam." Also he narrates through another chain from ʿAmr b. Khabīr al-Shaʾbānī that he said, "I was with Kaʾb al-Ahbār on the mountain, Dayr al-Murrān; and he saw a flowing chasm in it; so he said, 'Here the son of Adam had killed his brother, and this is the trace of his blood; God has made it a sign for the worlds.'"

These two traditions show that there was there some firm sign, which was claimed to be the blood of Hābīl. In all probability, it looks like so many myths which crafty people have invented, so that people should come there to visit it, bringing with them large votive offerings and precious gifts, not unlike so many palm-prints and footprints on stones,[1] and the grave of the grandmother[2] and other such things.

(5) Ahmad, al-Bukhārī, Muslim, al-Tirmidhī, al-Nasāʾī, Ibn Mājah, Ibn Jarīr and Ibn al-Mundhir have narrated from Ibn Masʾūd that he said, "The Messenger of God, said, 'No soul will be slain unjustly but a portion of its blood shall be apportioned to the first son of Adam, because he was the first to establish the custom of killing.'" (*ibid.*)

Author's comments: This theme has been narrated through other Sunnī and Shīʾah chain.

(6) Humrān said, "I said to Abū Jaʾfar, 'What is the meaning of the words of God, the Mighty, the Great: *For this reason did We prescribe to the Children of Israel that whoever slays a soul, unless it be for manslaughter or for mischief in the land, it is as though he slew all men*?'" He [Humrān] said, "How can it be as though he slew all men, while he had slain a single soul? He said, 'He will be put in a place in Jahannam (Gehenna) where the punishment of the people of the Fire reaches its utmost limit; if he had killed all men, he would have entered the same place.' I said, 'Then if he killed another (man)?' He said, 'It will be increased for him.'" (*al-Kāfī*)

Author's comments: al-Sadūq too has narrated a similar tradition in *Maʾāni al-akhbār* from Humrān.

Humran's question, "Then if he killed another (man)?" points to the above-mentioned objection that it makes one murder equal to that murder plus all others. The Imam has replied that his punishment will be increased for him.

At this juncture someone may think that this reply of the Imam goes against the equality mentioned in the verse: *whoever slays a soul it is as though he slew all men*, because increase means that murder of one or many or all is not equal. But this objection is not sustainable, because

1 It is attributed mostly to the Prophet. (Trans.)

2 In Jeddah (Saudi Arabia) there is a large grave, which public attributes to Hawwāʾ (Adam's wife); they even claim that this was the reason the town was named *Jaddah* (grand-mother)! (Trans.)

equality refers to the nature of punishment, that is, all murderers—whether of one or many or all—will be put in one valley of Jahannam, and to this fact refer the Imam's words: "if he had killed all men, he would have entered the same place."

The evidence for this explanation is found in a tradition narrated by al-ʿAyyāshī in his *al-Tafsīr*, from the same Humrān from Abū ʿAbdillāh about this verse, that the Imam said, "There is a place in the Fire where the punishment of all the people of the Fire reaches its utmost limit, so he will be put in it." "I [that is, Humrān] said, 'And if he had killed two?' (The Imam, a.s.), said, 'Don't you see that there is no place in the Fire more severe in punishment than this?' Then he said, '[His punishment] will be increased according to his deed '"

The Imam has joined negative and positive in his reply; it points to what we have already explained that equality is in the nature of punishment and difference will be in intensity of punishment and the effect it will have on the killer.

Some more evidence may be found in what Hannān b. Sudayr has narrated from Abū ʿAbdillāh that he said about the verse: *whoever slays a soul, it is as though he slew all men*. "There is a valley in Jahannam, if he slew all men, he will be (put) in it, and if he slew one soul he will be (put) in it." This too is narrated in *al-Tafsīr* of al-ʿAyyāshī.

Author's comments: It is as though the verse is quoted not verbatim in this *hadīth*.

(7) [al-Kulaynī] narrates through his chain from Fudayl b. Yasār that he said, "I asked Abū Jaʾfar, about the word of God, the Mighty, the Great, in His Book: *and whoever keeps it alive, it is as though he kept alive all men*. He said, '(It is saving) from burning or drowning.' I said, 'He who takes him out from error to guidance?' He said, 'That is its greatest *taʾwīl*.'" (*al-Kāfī*)

Author's comments: al-Shaykh has narrated it in his *al-Amālī,* and al-Barqī in his *al-Mahāsin*, through Fudayl from Abū Jaʾfar; and it has been narrated by Sumāʾah and Humrān from Abū ʿAbdillāh.

The statement that saving from error is the greatest *taʾwīl* of this verse means that it is its finest and most subtle explanation. In early period of Islam the word, *taʾwīl*, was often used as a synonym of *tafsīr*.

This explanation of ours is supported by what has been narrated in *al-Tafsīr* of al-ʿAyyāshī from Muḥammad b. Muslim from Abū Jaʾfar that he said, "I asked the Imam, about the word of God: *whoever slays a soul, unless it be for manslaughter or for mischief in the land, it is as though he*

slew all men. (The Imam) said, 'For him there is a place in the Fire, if he killed all men, his punishment will not increase on it.' He said, '*and whoever keeps it alive, it is as though he kept alive all men*. He did not kill him, or saved him from drowning or burning; and the greatest of this all is that he takes him out from error to guidance.'"

Author's comments: The Imam's saying, "He did not kill him," means: 'He did not take revenge against him (the victim) though he could do so after the killing has been proved.'

(8) al-ʿAyyāshī also says in his *al-Tafsīr* that Abū Basīr narrated from Abū Jaʾfar that he said, "I asked him (the Imam, about the verse): *whoever keeps it alive, it is as though he kept alive all men;* he, said, 'Whoever saves one from the unbelief (*kufr*) to belief (*īmān*).'"

Author's comments: This theme has been mentioned in many traditions narrated through Sunnī chains.

(9) Abū Jaʾfar said, "Extravagants are those who regard unlawful things as lawful and shed blood." (*Majmaʾ al-bayān*)

An Academic Discourse and Application

The Torah says:

> And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the LORD.
>
> And she again bare his brother Abel. And Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground.
>
> And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD.
>
> And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering:
>
> But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell.
>
> And the LORD said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen?
>
> If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee *shall be* his desire, and thou shalt rule over him.
>
> And Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him.
>
> And the LORD said unto Cain, Where *is* Abel thy brother? and

he said, I know not: Am I my brother's keeper?
And he said, What hast thou done? The voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground.
And now art thou cursed from the earth, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand;
When thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength; a fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth.
And Cain said unto the LORD, My punishment is greater than I can bear.
Behold, thou hast driven me out this day from the face of the earth; and from thy face shall I be hid; and I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth; and it shall come to pass, that every one that findeth me shall slay me.
And the LORD said unto him, Therefore whosoever slayeth Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him seven fold. And the LORD set a mark upon Cain, lest any finding him should kill him.
And Cain went out from the presence of the LORD, and dwelt in the land of Nod, on the east of Eden. (Genesis, 4:1-16)

The Qur'an says about the story of the two sons of Adam:

And relate to them the story of the two sons of Adam with truth when they both offered an offering, but it was accepted from one of them and was not accepted from the other. He said: "I will most certainly slay you." (The other) said: "Allah only accepts from those who are pious.
If you will stretch forth your hand towards me to slay me, I am not one to stretch forth my hand towards you to slay you; surely I fear Allah the Lord of the worlds.
Surely I wish that you should bear my sin as well as your own sin, and so you would be of the inmates of the Fire, and this is the recompense of the unjust.
Then his mind facilitated to him the slaying of his brother, so he slew him; then he became one of the losers.
Then Allah sent a crow digging up the earth so that he might show him how he should cover the dead body of his brother. He said: "Woe me! Do I lack the strength that I should be like this crow and cover the dead body of my brother?" So he became of those who regret. (Qur'an, 5:27–31)

You should contemplate on this story as described by the Torah and

then compare it with the narrative of the Qur'an; then decide for yourself.

The first thing which hits your eyes in the story of the Torah is that it has turned God the Lord into an earthly creature in the image of man, who lives with the men, issues decrees for and against them as another man may do; he comes near him and talks to him as one man to another; then he hides himself by going away and becoming absent; so he does not see an absent and far away thing or person as he sees a nearby and present person. In short, he is just like a terrestrial man in every aspect; the only difference is that his intentions come into force and his orders are carried out. On this basis are built all the teachings of the Torah and the Gospel; far exalted be God from such insinuations!

This Biblical story makes us to understand that man at that time lived face to face with God and his physical presence; then God hid himself from Cain or from Cain and people like him, while the others continued to see him plainly. But irrefutable proofs show that mankind is one species, its individuals have similar faculties and powers, and they live in this world the material lives, while God is totally free of material attributes and conditions; accidents of possibility and attributes of defect cannot touch his subtle position—and this is what the Qur'an describes.

As for the Qur'an, its story is based on the fact that all men share similar traits and is joined in humanity. Then it goes on to tell the story of the appearance of the crow on the scene, and discloses the fact that man gradually advances to his perfection, and that his step-by-step perfection is based on his sensory perception and contemplation. Then it describes the talk of the two brothers; and quotes Hābīl's discourse which contains brilliant cognition of human nature, and fundamental religious factors like *tawhīd*, prophethood and resurrection; then he explains piety and impiety, justice and injustice—the two basics which govern all divine laws and shariah's rules; finally he elaborates the principle of justice of God concerning acceptance and non-acceptance and the recompense in the next world.

Then the Qur'an describes the remorse and regret of the killer and his loss in this world and the next. Lastly, it shows the gravity of the crime of murder that to slay one soul is tantamount to slaying all men; and whoever keeps one soul alive is as though he kept alive all men.

Verses 33–40

The verses are not without some connection with the preceding ones. Although the story of the slaying of a son of Adam by his brother and the subsequent prescription to the Children of Israel regarding murder, had not specifically laid down any punishment or sentence, yet the topics have affinity with these verses that describe the punishment of thieves and those who make mischief in the land.

خِلَافٍ أَوْ يُنْفَوْا مِنَ الْأَرْضِ ۚ ذَٰلِكَ لَهُمْ خِزْيٌ فِي الدُّنْيَا ۖ وَلَهُمْ فِي الْآخِرَةِ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ ﴿٣٣﴾

(5:33) ***The punishment of those who wage war against Allah and His Messenger and strive to make mischief in the land is only this, that they should be killed or crucified or their hands and their feet should be cut off on opposite sides or they should be banished from the land; this shall be as a disgrace for them in this world, and in the hereafter they shall have a grievous chastisement.***

Fasādan (mischief) is a *masdar* used in the sentence as a circumstantial clause. Waging war against God: It is impossible to take it in its literal sense; it can only be interpreted metaphorically. But the metaphorical meaning is very wide and it can be applied on disobeying any rule of the shariah and on every injustice and extravagance; yet the verse joins the Messenger with God and it means that the disobedience covers those rulings in which the Messenger had some involvement. This narrows the circle to include only those affairs for which God has given His Messenger certain authority, like fighting the disbelievers under the banner of the Prophet and keeping the roads safe from highway robbers, by maintaining the general law and order which the Prophet had established in the land. The clause: "and strive to make mischief in the land," pinpoints the intended meaning, that is, to make mischief in the land by disturbing the peace and highway robbery; it does not refer to fighting against the Muslims. Moreover, it is known that the Prophet had never meted out the above-mentioned punishments of killing, crucifying, cutting their hands

and feet on opposite sides or imprisonment to the disbelievers who were vanquished in wars.

Apart from that, the exception contained in the next verse indicates that waging war against God and the Messenger only means this making mischief in the land, because one may repent from waging war, and not from polytheism, etc.

Therefore, waging war and making mischief obviously mean the same thing, that is, disturbing general law and order. Law and order is upset when fear and anxiety prevail in society; normally this happens when arms are used and lead to killings. That is why the *sunnah* explains making mischief as drawing sword, etc., as we shall write under "Traditions," God willing.

... that they should be killed or crucified or their hands and their feet should be cut off on opposite sides or they should be banished from the land: *al-Taqtīl*, *al-Taslīb and al-Taqtī*ʾ are on the stem of *al-Tafʿīl* from the roots, *al-qatl* (to kill), *al-Salb* (to crucify) and *al-qat*ʾ (to cut off), and accordingly emphasize or enhance the root meanings. The conjunctive *aw* (or) indicates alternatives, showing that the two (or more) sides cannot appear together. The question arises whether there is any sequence or choice between the four alternative punishments mentioned here; the conjunctive does not throw light on it, and some other spoken words, or circumstantial factor is needed for deciding it. Thus the verse in this sense is vague. However, traditions have explained it and those narrated from the Imams of *Ahl al-bayt* shows that the four laid down punishments are applied according to the level of the mischief made. For example, a man draws sword and kills and takes property; another one only kills, a third one only takes property, and a fourth only draws sword—obviously each one's punishment would differ from the others, as will be explained under "Traditions."

The words: "their hands and their feet should be cut off on opposite sides," mean that if the hand is cut on the right side, the foot should be cut on the left; this only shows that cutting the hands and the feet means cutting one hand and one foot (on opposite sides), not both hands and both feet.

As for the words: "or they should be banished from the land," *al-nafy* means banishment; tradition explains it as banishing him from one town to another.

The verse contains other matters concerned with the law; their details

should be seen in books of jurisprudence.

... this shall be as a disgrace for them in this world, and in the hereafter they shall have a grievous chastisement: *al-Khizy* (disgrace); its meaning is clear. It has been argued on the strength of this verse that if the prescribed punishment is meted out to a guilty man, it does not necessarily mean that he will not be punished in the hereafter; and it is true to a certain extent.

إِلَّا الَّذِينَ تَابُوا مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ تَقْدِرُوا عَلَيْهِمْ ۖ فَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿٣٤﴾

(5:34) ***Except those who repent before you have them in your power; so know that Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.***

However, after one is caught and proof is established against him, the prescribed punishment is not waived. The sentence: "so know that God is Forgiving, Merciful," alludes to the waiver of the said punishment. It is one of the verses where forgiveness is used for affairs other than of the next world.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَابْتَغُوا إِلَيْهِ الْوَسِيلَةَ وَجَاهِدُوا فِي سَبِيلِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ ﴿٣٥﴾

(5:35) ***O you who believe! Fear Allah and seek means of nearness to Him and strive hard in His way that you may be successful.***

al-Rāghib has said:

> "*al-Wasīlah* (with *s*)means attaining something with longing; it is more particular than *al-waṣilah* (with *ṣ* = joining, attaining) as it has added connotation of longing. God says: *and seek means of nearness to Hi*m; the reality of this means of nearness to God is to comply with demands of His path with knowledge and worship, and pursuit of virtues of the shariah, and it is like *al-qurbah* (nearness)."

It is a sort of joining together, that is, a spiritual joining which connects the slave with his master; there is no link that connects man with his Lord except the submissiveness of worship and veneration. Therefore, the means of nearness means ensuring the reality of veneration and turning the face of humility and poverty to His direction—this is then

the connecting link that joins the servant to his Lord. As for knowledge and good deed, these are obviously its tools and concomitants, except if knowledge and deed are used to this very condition.

It is clear from the above discourse that in the clause: "and strive hard in His way," the word *al-jihād* (fighting, striving) has been used in its wider sense which covers both fighting the unbelievers and struggling against one's base desires and anger. There is no reason to restrict it to the fight against unbelievers, especially as the clause is connected to the preceding order to seek means of nearness to God, and you have seen what it means. Moreover, the reason given in the two following verses is more appropriate to that wider connotation.

However, it is possible to restrict this *jihād* to the fight against unbelievers, keeping in view the Qur'anic style: The *jihād* in this verse is qualified with the phrase: "in His way," and this qualification has been used in all the verses which exhort Muslims to fight the enemy; while general striving does not contain this condition, as God says: *And (as for) those who strive hard for Us, We will most certainly guide them onto Our ways; and Allah is most surely with the doers of good* (29:69). Accordingly, the order to fight in the way of God after the order to seek means of nearness to Him mentions a particular after the general for showing its importance; and probably the same is the case of the order of seeking means of nearness to Him coming after the order of fearing God.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَوْ أَنَّ لَهُمْ مَا فِي الْأَرْضِ جَمِيعًا وَمِثْلَهُ مَعَهُ لِيَفْتَدُوا بِهِ
مِنْ عَذَابِ يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ مَا تُقُبِّلَ مِنْهُمْ ۖ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ﴿٣٦﴾ يُرِيدُونَ
أَنْ يَخْرُجُوا مِنَ النَّارِ وَمَا هُمْ بِخَارِجِينَ مِنْهَا ۖ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ مُقِيمٌ ﴿٣٧﴾

(5:36-37) ***Surely (as for) those who disbelieve even if they had what is in the earth, all of it, and the like of it with it, that they might ransom themselves with it from the punishment of the Day of Resurrection, it shall not be accepted from them, and they shall have a painful punishment. They would desire to go forth from the Fire, and they shall not go forth from it, and they shall have a lasting punishment***

As we have pointed out above, the two verses apparently give the reason of the theme of the preceding verse. The three verses together enjoin

people to fear God, seek means of nearness to Him and fight in His way, because these are the important means for warding off the painful lasting punishment from them. That is the only relevant factor, and nothing else can take its place; because if the unbelievers (who had not feared God, and had not sought any means of nearness to Him, nor had they fought in His way) had possession of all that is in the earth—and usually it is the utmost that a man desires—and then they were given again as much, and they wished to ransom themselves with it from the punishment of the Day of Resurrection, it shall not be accepted from them, and they shall have a painful chastisement; naturally they would desire to go out of the Fire but they shall not succeed, because it is a lasting punishment which would never go away from them.

The verses show that:

First: The punishment is the basic aspect which is nearer to man; it is only *īmān* and piety which ward off this punishment from him, as the words of God point to it: *And there is not one of you but shall come down to it; this is a decided decree of your Lord. Then We shall deliver those who were pious, and We shall leave the unjust therein on their knees* (19:71–72). *Most surely man is in loss, except those who believe and do good, and enjoin on each other truth, and enjoin on each other patience* (103:2–3).

Second: The original human nature, which feels pain from fire in this world, will not become inactive or null and void in the next world; otherwise they would not have felt pain or agony of fire, nor would have they desired to go forth from it.

وَالسَّارِقُ وَالسَّارِقَةُ فَاقْطَعُوا أَيْدِيَهُمَا جَزَاءً بِمَا كَسَبَا نَكَالًا مِنَ اللَّهِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ ﴿٣٨﴾ فَمَنْ تَابَ مِنْ بَعْدِ ظُلْمِهِ وَأَصْلَحَ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ يَتُوبُ عَلَيْهِ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿٣٩﴾

(5:38–39) ***And (as for) the man who steals and the woman who steals, cut off their hands as a punishment for what they have earned, an exemplary punishment from Allah; and Allah is Mighty, Wise. But whoever repents after his inequity and reforms (himself), then surely Allah will turn to him (mercifully); surely Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.***

"And" begins the new sentence, and here it stands for *ammā* (as for);

that is why the predicate "cut off" has taken *fā* (then—not translated in English), as is usual for the clause which comes in reply of *ammā*; it is said by the exegetes. The word, *aydi* (hands) is plural, which in Arabic is used for at least three items, while here it means only two hands. It is said that such usage is common; some, rather many, organs in human body are double, like eyes, ears, hands, feet and legs; when two persons are involved the total of these organs comes to four, which demands plural, like their eyes, hands and legs, etc. The usage of plural spread to organs of two persons, even if the said organ was not double. For example, they say: 'I covered the backs and stomachs [in plural] of the two with hitting.' God says: *If you both turn to Allah, then indeed your hearts [in plural] are already inclined ...* (66:4). "Hand" is used for the organ attached to shoulder; according to traditions here it refers to the right hand; cutting of hand means severing the whole or part of it with a sharp instrument.

The words: "as a punishment for what they have earned," are apparently a circumstantial clause connected to the cutting, that is, while the cutting is a punishment from God for what they have earned; *al-nakāl* (exemplary punishment, meted out so as to make the culprit as well as the others desist from the crime.)

As the cutting of hand is an exemplary punishment, the statement quite appropriately follows it: "But whoever repents after his iniquity and reforms (himself), then surely God will turn to him (mercifully)." The meaning: As the cutting of hand is an exemplary punishment given with the aim of making the culprit desist in future from his crime, so whoever repents after his iniquity and reforms himself and does not think of stealing—and it is this factor by which repentance is established—then surely God will accept his repentance and turn to him with forgiveness and mercy, because He is Forgiving, Merciful. He says: *Why should Allah chastise you if you are grateful and believe? And Allah is the Appreciator, Knowing* (4:147).

There are many other jurisprudential topics connected with this verse; interested readers should consult books of *fiqh* for them.

أَلَمْ تَعْلَمْ أَنَّ اللَّهَ لَهُ مُلْكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ يُعَذِّبُ مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَيَغْفِرُ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ ۗ وَاللَّهُ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴿٤٠﴾

(5:40) ***Do you not know that Allah—His is the kingdom of the heavens and the earth; He chastises whom he pleases; and forgives***

whom he pleases and Allah has the power over all things.

It gives the reason why He accepts the repentance of the stealing man and woman when they repent and reform themselves after their iniquity: To God belongs the kingdom of the heavens and the earth, and the King has full authority and power to decide about his kingdom and his subjects as he pleases—be it punishment or mercy. Therefore God has the power and authority to chastise whom He pleases and forgive whom He pleases, according to the underlying reason and wisdom—thus He chastises the stealing man and woman if they do not repent, and forgives them if they repent.

The end clause: "and God has power over all things," explains the reason of the sentence: "His is the kingdom of the heavens and the earth"; Kingdom is an aspect of power while ownership emanates from creation and origination, that is, divine guardianship.

We may explain it as follows: God is the Creator and Originator of all things; there is nothing whose self and its effects do not belong to God. He is the Giver of what He gives and Withholder of what He withholds; He has power to do with every thing as He pleases—and it is the ownership. God says: *Say: "Allah is the Creator of all things, and He is the One, the Subduer."* (13:16). *Allah is He besides Whom there is no god, the Ever-living, the Self-subsisting by Whom all subsist; slumber does not overtake Him nor sleep; whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth is His* (2:255). Also He has power to do with all the things whatever He pleases and intends; it is because everything begins from Him, and His decree is enforced and His will effective—and it is the kingdom and rulership on everything. Thus God is the Owner because everything subsists by Him, and is the King because He is Powerful, He is neither powerless nor prevented from enforcing His pleasure and will.

Examining Narrations

(10) [al-Kulaynī] narrates through his chain from Abū Sālih from Abū ʿAbdillāh that he said, "There came to the Messenger of God, a group from Banū Dubbah, (who were) sick. So the Messenger of God said to them, 'Stay with me; when you will recover, I shall send you in an expedition.' They said, 'Keep usout of Medina.'

So he sent them to the *Ibili's-Sadaqah*,[1] they drank its (camel's) urine and ate from its milk. When they were cured and became strong, they killed three camel-herders. It (the news) reached the Messenger of God and he sent ʿAlī to them, and lo! They were in a valley wandering, unable to go out of it, near the land of Yemen. He captured them and brought them to the Messenger of God. Then this verse was revealed: *The punishment of those who wage war against Allah and His Messenger and strive to make mischief in the land is only this, that they should be killed or crucified or their hands and their feet should be cut off on opposite sides or they should be banished from the land; ...*" (*al-Kāfī*)

Author's comments: al-Shaykh has narrated it in *al-Tahdhīb* through his chain from Abū Sālih with minor difference; and al-Ayyāshī has narrated it in his *al-Tafsīr* from the same Imam and there is in it at the end the addition: So the Messenger of God chose to cut off their hands and feet on opposite sides.

This story is narrated in Sunnī collections of *ahādīth* (including *al-Sihāh al-Sittah*) with different chains and varying particulars. Some of those traditions say that the Messenger of God cut their hands and feet on opposite sides and gouged out their eyes; others say that he killed some of them and crucified some others and cut off and gouged out eyes of yet others; others tell us that he gouged out their eyes because they had gouged out the eyes of the camel-herders; still others say that God forbade him to gouge out the eyes, and that the verse was revealed admonishing him for this mutilation; some of them say that he wanted to gouge out their eyes but did not do so; etc.

However, the traditions narrated from the Imams of *Ahl al-bayt* do not mention the gouging out at all.

(11) [al-Kulaynī] narrates through his chain from ʿAmr b. ʿUthmān b. ʿUbaydullāh al-Madāinī from Abu al-Hasan al-Ridā that he was asked about the words of God; the Mighty, the Great: *The punishment of those who wage war against Allah and His Messenger and strive to make mischief in the land is only this, that they should be killed or crucified or their hands and their feet should be cut off on opposite sides or they should be banished from the land.* "What

1 A place where camels—donated as *sadaqah* (alms-giving, etc.) to Bayt al-Māl—were kept. (Ed.)

is it that when he does it he becomes liable to one of the four (punishments)? Then he (the Imam) said, 'When he wages war against God and His Messenger and strives to make mischief in the land and kills someone, he will be killed; and if he kills and takes (other's) property, he will be killed and crucified; and if he takes property without killing, his hand and foot will be cut off on opposite sides; and if he draws out sword, wages war against God and His Messenger and strives to make mischief in the land but does not kill and does not take property, he will be banished from the land.' I said, 'How will he be banished from the land and what is the limit of his banishment?' He said, 'He shall be banished from the town where he had done what he had done to another town, and it will be written to the people of that (another) town that he has been banished, so they should not sit with him, nor should they sell anything to him, establish marriage ties with him, or take food or drink with him; this will be done to him for a year; if he leaves that town for another town, the people of that town will be informed in similar terms, until the year comes to end. I said, 'And if he proceeds to the land of polytheism to enter it?' He said, 'If he proceeds to the land of polytheism to enter it, its people will be fought against.'" (*al-Kāfī*)

Author's comments: al-Shaykh in *al-Tahdhīb* and al-ʿAyyāshī in his *al-Tafsīr* have narrated it from Abū Ishāq al-Madāinī from the same Imam; and nearly-*mutawātir* traditions of this meaning have been narrated from the Imams of *Ahl al-bayt*. Also it has been narrated through various Sunnī chains; and some of their traditions say that it depends on Imam's discretion, he shall kill if he pleases, and shall crucify if he pleases, and shall cut off hands and feet on opposite sides if he pleases, and shall banish if he pleases. Some Shīʾah traditions too likewise say that the Imam has the discretion. For example, see the tradition narrated in *al-Kāfī* from Jamīl b. Darrāj from al-Ṣādiq about this verse: He says: "I said, 'What are they liable to form these prescribed punishments that God has named?' He said, 'It is up to Imam; he shall cut off if he pleases, and banish if he pleases, and crucify if he pleases, and kill if he pleases.' I said, 'Banishment, up to where?' He said, 'He shall be banished from one town to another;' and said that ʿAlī had banished two men from Kūfah to Basrah." Its details may be found in *fiqh*. However, the verse is not without a certain indication that there is a sequence in these laid down punishments according to the

levels of disorder. The alternatives—killing, crucifying, cutting of hand and foot on opposite sides and banishment—are not on the same level, on a par; they greatly differ in intensity and degree, and this in itself is a rational proof of this sequential order.

Also, the verse clearly shows that these are the laid down punishments for waging such war and making mischief in the land; so whoever draws out a sword and strives to make mischief in the land or slays someone, he will have to be killed because he is a fighter against God and His Messenger and a mischief maker; it does not come under retribution, that is, he is not being killed because he has slew a respectable soul; so even if the heirs of the slain person agree to take blood-money, his punishment of killing is not waived. al-ʿAyyāshī has narrated in his *al-Tafsīr* from Muḥammad b. Muslim from Abū Jaʾfar a tradition which says, *inter alia*, "Abū ʿUbaydah said, 'May God ameliorate you! (What) do you see if the heir of the slain person pardoned him (that is, the slayer)?' Abū Jaʾfar said, 'If they pardoned, then it is incumbent on the Imam to kill him, because he certainly had waged war, killed and stolen.' Then Abū ʿUbaydah said, 'Then if the heirs of the slain wanted to take blood-money from him and let him go free, do they have the right to do so?' He said, 'No. His (punishment) is to be killed.'"

(12) [al-Suyūtī] narrates from Ibn Abī Shaybah, ʿAbd b. Hamīd, Ibn Abi al-Dunyā (in *Kitāb al-Ashrāf*), Ibn Jarīr and Ibn Abī Hātim from al-Shaʾbī that he said, "Hārithah b. Badr al-Tamīmī, a resident of Basrah, had made mischief in the land and waged war; and he talked with some men from Quraysh to obtain from ʿAlī a promise of security for him, but they refused. Then he came to Saʾīd b. Qays al-Hamadānī. So he approached ʿAlī and said, 'O Leader of the Faithful! What is the recompense of those who wage war against God and His Messenger and strive to make mischief in the land?' He said, '*(It is) that they should be killed or crucified or their hands and their feet should be cut off on opposite side, or they should be banished from the land.*' Then (the Imam) said, '*Except those who repent before you have them in your power.*' Then Saʾīd said, 'Even if it be Hārithah b. Badr.' Thereafter, Saʾīd said, 'This is Hārithah b. Badr; he has come repenting; is he then safe?' [The Imam, a.s.], said, 'Yes.' So [Saʾīd] brought him to ʿAlī, and he did his *bayʾah*; and the Imam accepted it from him and wrote for him a warrant of safety." (*al-Durr al-manthūr*)

Author's comments: Saʾīd spoke the words, 'Even if it be Hārithah b. Badr', as an appendix he attached to the verse, with the aim of showing its unrestricted generality which covers everyone who repents after waging war and making mischief. Such additions are found generally in every speech.

(13) [al-Kulaynī] narrates through his chain from Sawrah Banī Kulayb that he said, "I said to Abū ʿAbdillāh, 'A man comes out of his house, proceeding to mosque or for some other work; another man meets him and going behind him, beats him and takes away his clothes?' (The Imam) said, 'What do they say about it those who are in your place?' I said, 'They say that it is open immorality; and war mongering happens in the towns of polytheists.' He said, 'Which has more sanctity, the house of Islam or the house of polytheism?' I said, 'The house of Islam.' Then (the Imam) said, 'Such people are covered by this verse: *The punishment of those who wage war against Allah and His Messenger and strive to make mischief in the land is only this, that they should be killed* '" (*al-Kāfī*)

Author's comments: What the narrator has pointed out concerning the opinion of the people has been narrated in some Sunnī traditions. For example, al-Dahhāk has explained the reason of its revelation in these words: "This verse was revealed about the polytheists, and al-Tabarī has written in his *al-Tafsīr* that ʿAbd al-Malik b. Marwān wrote to Anas asking him about this verse. So Anas wrote to him: 'Surely this verse was revealed about those people from the ʿArniyyīn, and they were from Bujaylah.' Anas said, 'Then they apostatized from Islam, killed the camel-herder, took away the camels, and spread terror in the way and committed adultery. So the Messenger of God asked Gabriel about the judgement regarding those who wage war. He said, "Whoever steals and spreads terror in the way and thinks unlawful hidden part as lawful, you crucify him."'" There are several other traditions.

The verse, with its generality, supports the tradition of *al-Kāfī*; and it is known that reason or occasion of revelation does not restrict the apparent meaning of a verse.

(14) al-Qummī has written about the words of God: *O you who believe! Fear Allah and seek means of nearness to Him* ..., that (the Imam) said, "Come near God through the Imam."

Author's comments: That is, through obedience to the Imam. Thus it is

based on the flow of the Qur'an, and applies the verse to its best import. A similar narrative has come from Ibn Shahrāshūb that he said, "The Leader of the Faithful, said about the divine word: *and seek means of nearness to Him*: 'I am the means of nearness to Him.'" And nearer to it is the narration of *Basāir al-darajāt*, through his chains from Salmān from ʿAlī. Also possibly the two narratives may be a sort of interpretation. Ponder on it.

(15) *Majmaʾ al-bayān* quotes a tradition from the Prophet that he said, "Ask from God for me the *wasīlah*, as it is a rank in the Garden, will not get it except one servant, and I hope that I shall be him."

(16) [al-Sadūq] narrates through his chain from Abū Saʾīd al-Khudrī that he said, "The Messenger of God, said, 'When you ask from God, ask for me the *wasīlah*.' We asked the Prophet about the *wasīlah*; so he said, 'It is my rank in the Garden ...'" (It is a long narrative, known as the *Hadīth* of *Wasīlah*.)

If you meditate on this *hadīth* and as to how the meaning of the verse fits on it, you will find that *wasīlah* is the position of the Prophet in presence of his Lord, with which he gets nearer to God; and joins him there his pure progeny, then the good servants from among his *ummah*. And it has been narrated in some traditions narrated from them that verily the Messenger of God adheres to his Lord, and we adhere to him and you [the Shīʾahs] adhere to us.

And to this, returns what we have written concerning the two narratives of al-Qummī and Ibn Shahrāshūb that possibly they are a sort of interpretation. Probably God will help us to explain this theme in a more appropriate place further on.

(17) Appended to these traditions is the narration of al-ʿAyyāshī from Abū Basīr that he said, "I heard Abū Jaʾfar, saying, "Enemies of ʿAlī, they shall abide in the Fire; God has said: *and they shall not go forth from it.*"

(18) *Tafsīr al-burhān* writes about the verse: *And (as for) the man who steals and the woman who steals cut off their hands*, quoting ash-Shaykh who narrates in *al-Tahdhīb* through his chain from Abū Abraham that he said, "The hand of the thief will be cut and his thumb and palm left (intact), and his foot will be cut and his heel left (intact) so he shall walk with it."

(19) [al-Shaykh] also narrates through his chain from Muḥammad b. Muslim that he said, "I said to Abū ʿAbdillāh, 'In (theft of) how much will the thief's hand be cut?' He said, 'In one-fourth of

dīnār.'" He (Muḥammad) says, "I told him, 'In two dirhams?' He said, 'In one-fourth of dīnār; whatever the value of dīnār may be.'" He (Muḥammad) says, "Then I said to him, 'What do you think? One who steals less than one-fourth of a dīnār, will the name of thief apply to him? And is he in that condition, a thief before God?' So he said, 'Anyone who steals from a Muslim a thing which he owns and keeps preserved, the name, thief, will apply to him, and he is a thief before God, yet (his hand) shall not be cut off except in one-fourth of a dīnār or more; and if the hand of a thief were to be cut off in less than one-fourth of a dīnār you would have found the people in general amputated.'" (*al-Tahdhīb*)

Author's comments: The words of the Imam, if the hand of a thief were to be cut off in less than one-fourth of a dīnār , indicate that this law of cutting of hand (with this condition) is a relief from God and His mercy towards His servants. This rule, that is, restriction of this order to the theft of one-fourth of a dīnār or more, is narrated through some Sunnī chains too; it has been narrated in *al-Sahīh* of al-Bukharī and *al-Sahīh* of Muslim through their chains from ʿÃishah that the Messenger of God said, "Will not be cut the hand of a thief except in one-fourth of a dīnār and more."

(20) Samāʾah narrates from Abū ʿAbdillāh that he said, "When a thief is caught his middle of palm will be cut off, then if he returned (stole again) his leg will be cut off from middle of foot; then if he returned he will be put in prison; then if he stole in the prison, he will be killed." (*al-Tafsīr*, al-ʿAyyāshī)

(21) Zurārah narrates from Abū Jaʾfar, (that he was asked) about a man who stole and his right hand was cut off, then he (again) stole and his left leg was cut off, and (now) he steals the third time? (The Imam) said, "The Leader of the Faithful, used to imprison him for ever, and he used to say, 'I feel ashamed of my Lord that I should leave him without any hand with which he should cleanse himself and without any leg with which he should go for his needs.' (The Imam then) said, 'So when he cut the hand he cut it below the joint of fingers with the palm, and when he cut the leg he cut it below the ankle.' (The Imam) said, 'He did not think it proper to disregard any of the laid down punishments.'" (*ibid.*)

(22) Zarqān (companion and fast friend of Ibn Abī Duwād) said, "One day Ibn Abī Duwād returned from al-Muʾtasim's presence and he was distressed. So I asked him about it. He said, 'Today

I wish that I had died twenty years earlier.'" He (Zarqān) said, "I told him, 'Why?' He said, 'Because of what happened from this black, Abū Jaʾfar Muḥammad b. ʿAlī b. Moses, today in presence of Amīr al-muʾminīn al-Muʾtasim.'" (Zarqan says) "I said, 'And how was it?' He said, 'A thief confessed to stealing and asked the caliph to cleanse him by punishing him according to the shariah. The caliph gathered jurisprudents in his presence and Muḥammad b. ʿAlī (too) was brought there. So (the caliph) asked us about the cutting (of hand), from which place it should be cut off.' He (Ibn Abī Duwād) said, 'I said, "From wrist, because God says regarding *tayammum: and wipe your faces and your hands* [5:6];" and a group joined me in this (opinion); and some others said, "Rather it must be cut from elbow." He (the caliph) asked, "And what is its proof?" They said, "Because when God said: *and your hands up to elbows*, regarding the washing (in *wudūʾ*), it proved that the limit of hand is up to elbow."' (Ibn Abī Duwād) said, 'Then he turned towards Muḥammad b. ʿAlī and said, "What do you say about it, O Abū Jaʾfar!" He said, "The people have already spoken about it, Amīr al-muʾminīn!" He said, "Leave aside what they have said; what do you have (about it)?" He said, "Excuse me from it, Amīr al-muʾminīn!" He said, "I adjure you by God that you should tell (me) what you know about it." He said, "Now that you have adjured me by God, I say that they have made a mistake in the *sunnah*; because cutting must compulsorily be at the joint of the fingers, and palm should be left (intact)." (The caliph) said, "And what is its proof?" He said, "The saying of the Messenger of God: *sajdah* is on seven organs: face and two hands and two knees and two feet; if his hand is cut off from wrist or elbow, he will not have a hand to do *sajdah* upon; and God, the Blessed, the High, says: *And that the places of* sajdah *are Allah's*, that is, these seven organs on which *sajdah* is done: *therefore call not upon any one with Allah* [72:18], *and what is Allah's is not cut off*." ' (Ibn Abī Duwād) said, 'So al-Muʾtasim liked it (very much) and ordered the thief's hand to be cut off from the fingers' joint, below the palm.' Ibn Abī Duwād said, 'I was extremely shocked and wished that I were dead.'"

Ibn Abī Zarqān said that Ibn Abī Duwād then continued, "After the third day I went to Muʾtasim and said, 'It is incumbent upon

me to give sincere advice to Amīr al-muʾminīn; and I am going to tell him that because of which, I know, I shall enter the Fire.' He said, 'And what is it?' I said, 'When Amīr al-muʾminīn gathers in his presence jurisprudents and scholars of his subjects for a problem in a religious matter, and asks them about its law, and they tell him what they know of the order concerning it; and there are in that gathering his sons, commanders, ministers and secretaries; and people have heard that [question and answers] from behind his door; then he leaves aside the opinions of all of them because of one man's opinion (in whose *imāmah* a group of this *ummah* believes, and claims that, that man has more right to this position than the caliph), then the caliph gives order according to that man's opinion, instead of the jurisprudents' order?'" (Ibn Abī Duwād) said, "So his color changed and he understood what I wanted to tell him; and said, 'May God give you good reward for your sincere advice!'"

He said, "On the fourth day he ordered a certain man from among his minister-secretaries to invite [Muḥammad b. ʿAlī] to his house. He (the Imam) refused to accept and said, 'You know that I do not attend your gatherings.' He said, 'I only invite you for a meal, and I love that you should step on my clothes (that is, carpets) and enter my house, so I should be blessed with your blessing; and so-and-so, son of so-and-so, a minister of the caliph, desires to meet you.' So he went to his place; when he was offered the meal, he felt the pain of poison, and (at once) called for his riding animal. The host asked him to stay; he said, 'My going out of your house is better for you.' So he remained in agony the whole day and night until he died." (*ibid.*)

Author's comments: This story has been narrated through other chains too. We have copied the whole narration, in spite of its length (like some preceding repeated traditions) because it contains some deep Qur'anic discourses that may help in understanding of the Qur'anic verses.

(23) [al-Suyūtī] narrates from Ahmad, Ibn Jarīr, and Ibn Abī Hātim from ʿAbdullāh b. ʿUmar that a woman committed theft in the time of the Messenger of God, and her right hand was cut off. So she said, "Do I have repentance? O Messenger of God!" He said, "Yes. Today you are (free) from your sin like the day you were born of your mother." Then God revealed the verse in the

chapter of "The Table": *But whoever repents after his iniquity and reforms (himself), then surely Allah will turn to him (mercifully), surely Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.*

Author's comments: The tradition is in the style of application and looks at the connection of the verse with the preceding one. Obviously, both verses were revealed together.

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Verses 41-50

These verses are interlinked revealed in a single context. Clearly they speak about a group from the People of the Book who had approached the Messenger of God regarding some laws of the Torah, hoping that he would give a judgement other than that of the Torah; and thus they would get relief from the strict ruling of their own Book. They told each other: "If you are given this—that is, what they desired—take it; and if you are not given this—that is, are given the same law of the Torah—then be cautious." The Prophet referred them to the ruling of the Torah, so they turned away from him. Also there was a group of hypocrites which had a tendency similar to that of the Jews; they wanted to put the Messenger of God into temptation, so that he might judge between them according to their desire, favoring the powerful segments of the society, as they were doing in the days of ignorance; and who is better than God to judge for a people who are sure?

The verses give credence to what has been narrated regarding its reason of revelation. That they were revealed concerning the Jews when two distinguished married persons from among them committed adultery; and their religious scholars desired to change the scriptural law of stoning to flogging. So they sent some people to ask the Messenger of God for the ruling about adultery of married persons; they enjoined them to accept it if he sentenced them to flogging, and reject it if he sentenced them to be stoned. The Messenger of God gave judgement for stoning, so they turned away from him. Then the Messenger of God asked Ibn Sūriyā what was the law of the Torah on this matter, and he adjured him by God and His signs not to hide what he knew of the truth; so he confirmed to the Messenger of God that the law of stoning was there in the Torah This story will come under "Traditions," God willing.

However, the verses independently throw light on their theme; they are not restricted in their connotation to their reason of revelation. This is the case in general with all the verses, which were revealed on particular occasions; the reasons or events of their revelation have no significance except as one, among many, of their applications. It is because the Qur'an is a comprehensive and everlasting Book, which is not, confined to a time

or space and not restricted to a particular group or event. God says: *... it is nothing but a reminder for all mankind* (12:104). *Blessed is He Who sent down the Furqān to His servant so that he may be a warner to the worlds* (25:1). *... and most surely it is a Mighty Book; falsehood shall not come to it from before it nor from behind it;* (41:41-42).

يَا أَيُّهَا الرَّسُولُ لَا يَحْزُنْكَ الَّذِينَ يُسَارِعُونَ فِي الْكُفْرِ مِنَ الَّذِينَ قَالُوا
آمَنَّا بِأَفْوَاهِهِمْ وَلَمْ تُؤْمِنْ قُلُوبُهُمْ ۛ وَمِنَ الَّذِينَ هَادُوا ۛ سَمَّاعُونَ لِلْكَذِبِ
سَمَّاعُونَ لِقَوْمٍ آخَرِينَ لَمْ يَأْتُوكَ ۖ يُحَرِّفُونَ الْكَلِمَ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَوَاضِعِهِ ۖ
يَقُولُونَ إِنْ أُوتِيتُمْ هَٰذَا فَخُذُوهُ وَإِنْ لَمْ تُؤْتَوْهُ فَاحْذَرُوا ۚ وَمَنْ يُرِدِ اللَّهُ
فِتْنَتَهُ فَلَنْ تَمْلِكَ لَهُ مِنَ اللَّهِ شَيْئًا ۚ أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ لَمْ يُرِدِ اللَّهُ أَنْ يُطَهِّرَ
قُلُوبَهُمْ ۚ لَهُمْ فِي الدُّنْيَا خِزْيٌ ۖ وَلَهُمْ فِي الْآخِرَةِ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ ﴿٤١﴾

(5:41) ***O Messenger! Let not those grieve you who strive together in hastening in unbelief from among those who say with their mouths: "We believe," and their hearts do not believe, and from among those who are Jews; (they are) listeners for the sake of a lie, listeners for another people who have not come to you; they alter the words from their places, saying: "If you are given this, take it, and if you are not given this, be cautious;" and as for him whose temptation Allah desires, you cannot control anything for him with Allah. Those are they for whom Allah does not desire that He should purify their hearts; they shall have disgrace in this world, and they shall have a grievous chastisement in the hereafter.***

The verse consoles the Prophet and placates him because of what he had to endure at the hands of those who are mentioned here. They were those who were striving together in hastening in disbelief; they went ahead rapidly on this path; their motives of disbelief were reflected in their words and deeds one after another; thus they were unbelievers striving in unbelief. It should be noted that striving in unbelief is not the same as striving to unbelief.

The clause: "from among those who say with their mouths: 'We believe', and their hearts do not believe," describes those who strive together in hastening in unbelief, that is, from among the hypocrites. It has given the attribute instead of naming the persons concerned, in order to describe

the reason of this prohibition. Likewise, the attribute: "who strive together in hastening in unbelief," points to the reason for not grieving. Meaning therefore will be as follows, and God knows better: These people should not grieve you by striving together in hastening in disbelief, because they have entered into Islam with their mouths only, not with their hearts; and they are not the believers; of the same character are the Jews who have approached you and have said what they said.

The context shows that the phrase: "and from among those who are Jews," is in conjunctive with the phrase: "from among those who say with their mouths: ..."; it is not an independent sentence. Accordingly, the words: "listeners for the sake of a lie, listeners for another people who have not come to you," are predicate of an omitted subject, that is, they are. These sentences describe the condition of the Jews; as for the hypocrites who have been mentioned at the beginning of the verse, obviously, their condition does not fit this description. These Jews are "listeners for the sake of a lie"; they avidly listen to a lie although they know it to be a lie; otherwise they were not liable to be blamed; and they are "listeners for another people who have not come to you"; that is, they accept whatever is reported to them and do whatever they are told. This variation in the import of listening necessitated the repetition of the word, "listeners." The first indicates paying attention to while the second signifies acceptance.

The clause: "they alter the words from their places," that is, after the words have been put in their proper places; it shows the attribute of "another people"; also with the same phrase is connected the sentence: "saying: 'If you are given this, take it, and if you are not given this, be cautious.'"

It all shows that a group of the Jews were involved in a religious problem; their Book contained clear divine order for it, but their scholars changed it knowingly; then they sent some people to the Prophet to seek his judgement on that matter, enjoining them to accept his decision if he decided according to their corrupted order, and be on guard if he decided otherwise.

The sentence: "and as for him whose temptation God desires, you cannot control anything for him with God," is parenthetical; it shows that the Jews in this affair are enmeshed in divine temptation and trial; therefore the Prophet should set his mind at rest that this affair is from God and it has to return to Him, and no one else has any authority on any of it; why should he feel grieved for a matter from which no one except God

can remove.

"Those are they for whom God does not desire that He should purify their hearts": Their hearts continue to wallow in their original filth and dirtiness, because they are piling up sin over sin, so God has left them to their error: *... but and He does not cause to err by it (any) except the transgressors* [2:26].

... they shall have disgrace in this world, and they shall have a grievous chastisement in the hereafter: It is a threat that the Jews will be disgraced in this world—and it has already been done—and shall have grievous punishment in the life hereafter.

سَمَّاعُونَ لِلْكَذِبِ أَكَّالُونَ لِلسُّحْتِ ۚ فَإِنْ جَاءُوكَ فَاحْكُمْ بَيْنَهُمْ أَوْ
أَعْرِضْ عَنْهُمْ ۖ وَإِنْ تُعْرِضْ عَنْهُمْ فَلَنْ يَضُرُّوكَ شَيْئًا ۖ وَإِنْ حَكَمْتَ
فَاحْكُمْ بَيْنَهُمْ بِالْقِسْطِ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُقْسِطِينَ ﴿٤٢﴾

(5:42) ***(They are) listeners of a lie, devourers of what is forbidden; therefore if they come to you, judge between them or turn aside from them, and if you turn aside from them, they shall not harm you in any way; and if you judge, judge between them with equity; surely Allah loves those who judge equitably.***

al-Rāghib says:

> "*al-Suht* (rind, bark which is destroyed); God says: *fa-yushitakum bi-ʾadhāb* ('lest He destroys you by a punishment' [20:61]); it has also been recited as *fa-yashitakum*; it is said: *suhtuh* and *asuhtuh*; from this root is derived *al-Suht*, a forbidden thing which brings shame to the user or doer, as though it destroys his religion and honor; God says: *devourers of what is forbidden*; and the Prophet, has said: 'All flesh that grows from forbidden things, Fire is more entitled to it;' and bribe is named *suht*."

Thus every property obtained unlawfully is *suht* (forbidden). The context shows that in this verse "what is forbidden" refers to bribe. This adjective as used here indicates that those Jewish scholars who had sent that group to the Prophet had taken bribe in that matter for altering the divine law; some people's safety was under threat because of that law, so they averted it with bribery; they took bribe and changed the order of God.

It is now clear that the two phrases: "listeners of a lie, devourers of

what is forbidden," taken together describe the condition of the whole nation; but taken separately, the words, "listeners of a lie," describe the attribute of preceding: *those who are Jews*, that is, those who were sent to the Prophet and their companions; and: "devourers of what is forbidden," points to the preceding: *another people who have not come to you*. In short, the scholars of the Jews devour bribe, and their followers, the general public, listen to their lies.

***... therefore if they come to you, judge between them or turn aside from them, and if you turn aside from them, they shall not harm you in any way; and if you judge, judge between them with equity; surely Allah loves those who judge equitably*:** The verse leaves it to the Prophet's discretion to judge between them—when they come to him for judgement—or to turn aside from them. It is understood that the Prophet was not to choose either of the two without an underlying reason and justification. In short, the matter was left to his own outlook. Further elaborating this option, God says that if the Prophet turned aside from them refusing to judge between them, they could not harm him in any way; and if he decided to judge, he was to judge with justice and equity.

Ultimately, it means that God does not like them to be judged except according to His law; the Prophet was to enforce divine law among them, if it was not acceptable to them, he should not involve himself with them because he could not apply any other law anywhere.

وَكَيْفَ يُحَكِّمُونَكَ وَعِنْدَهُمُ التَّوْرَاةُ فِيهَا حُكْمُ اللَّهِ ثُمَّ يَتَوَلَّوْنَ مِنْ بَعْدِ ذَٰلِكَ ۚ وَمَا أُولَٰئِكَ بِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٤٣﴾

(5:43) ***And how do they make you a judge and they have the Torah wherein is Allah's judgement? Yet they turn back after that, and these are not the believers.***

The verse points to a surprising behavior of the Jews: They are a nation having their own Book and shariah; they reject your Prophethood, Book and shariah; then they are faced with a problem about which their book contains a clear divine order; yet they turn back from the Torah with its divine order, while they are not those who believe in it.

Accordingly, the phrase: "Yet they turn back after that," means: they turn back from the law concerning that event although they do have the Torah, which contains divine commandments. The phrase: "and these are

not the believers," means: they do not believe in the Torah and its law; they have abandoned belief in the Book and its law, and turned to disbelief.

It is possible to take the words: "Yet they turn back," as referring to their rejection of the Prophet's judgement; and the phrase: "these are not the believers," as pointing to their disbelief in the Prophet, even though they had come to him and sought his judgement; or it could refer to their disbelief in the Torah and the Prophet together. But the explanation we have given earlier is more in keeping with the context.

The verse confirms to a certain extent the Torah now prevalent among the Jews. It is the book collected by Ezra by the permission of Cyrus, king of Persia, after he conquered Babylon, released the Children of Israel from captivity of Babylon, and allowed them to return to Palestine and rebuild the Temple at Jerusalem. It is the same Torah, which was in their hands during the time of the Prophet, and it is the same, which they have with them today. The Qur'an confirms that this present Torah contains laws of God, and it also says that alterations and changes have corrupted it.

The above discourse proves that the present Torah, prevalent among the Jews today, contains some parts of the original Torah sent down to Moses, also many of its parts have been changed and corrupted through addition, omission, change of word or context, etc. This is the Qur'anic view of the Torah and extensive research leads to the same conclusion.[1]

إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَا التَّوْرَاةَ فِيهَا هُدًى وَنُورٌ ۚ يَحْكُمُ بِهَا النَّبِيُّونَ الَّذِينَ أَسْلَمُوا
لِلَّذِينَ هَادُوا وَالرَّبَّانِيُّونَ وَالْأَحْبَارُ بِمَا اسْتُحْفِظُوا مِنْ كِتَابِ اللَّهِ وَكَانُوا
عَلَيْهِ شُهَدَاءَ ۚ فَلَا تَخْشَوُا النَّاسَ وَاخْشَوْنِ وَلَا تَشْتَرُوا بِآيَاتِي ثَمَنًا قَلِيلًا
وَمَنْ لَمْ يَحْكُمْ بِمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْكَافِرُونَ ﴿٤٤﴾ ۚ

(5:44) ***Surely We sent down the Torah in which was guidance and light; with it the prophets who submitted themselves (to Allah) were judging (matters) for those who were Jews, and (so did) the Divines and the scholars, as they were required to guard (part) of the Book of Allah, and they were witnesses thereof; therefore fear not the people and fear Me, and barter not My signs for a small***

1 For a concise, yet informative, discourse on compilation of Torah and Gospel see the translator's book, *The Qur'an and Hadīth*, available from Bilal Muslim Mission, Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania. (Trans.)

price; and whoever did not judge by what Allah revealed, those are they that are the unbelievers.

It gives the reason of what was explained in the preceding verse. This and the following verses describe that God had laid down for these nations, in their successive times, laws, and wrote them in the books revealed to them, in order that they should be guided by them and acquire insight through them, and they should serve as reference points in matters in which they differed; He ordered their prophets and scholars to judge matters by them; they were given the responsibility to guard the books and protect them from corruption and alteration; they were admonished not to accept any price for giving judgement—a price which was bound to be trivial [in comparison to God's pleasure]; they should not fear the people, rather they should fear God.

He emphasized it again and warned them of following their low desires, lest the worldly people seduce them from divinely revealed truth. He has appointed various sets of law for various people in different times, so that He might try them thoroughly; it is because abilities of times differ with changing eras, and two things which differ in strength and weakness cannot be perfected with one factor with one style.

... Surely We sent down the Torah in which was guidance and light: There was in it some guidance and some light with which the Israelites were led to some cognizance and laws adequately suitable to their condition, conforming to their capabilities. God has described in His book their general behavior and the particulars of their national affairs and limits of their understanding. Accordingly they were given a part of guidance and a part of light because they had appeared on the scene in remote past and primitive age with simple understanding; God says: *And We wrote for him in the tablets admonition from every thing and clear explanation of all things ...* (7:145).

... with it the prophets who submitted themselves (to Allah) were judging (matters) for those who were Jews: The prophets followed Islam, that is, submission to God, which is the religion with God. This nomenclature has been used to show that there is only one religion, and that is to submit to God and not to refrain from worshipping Him. A man who believes in God and submits to Him has no right to reject any of His commandments and laws.

... and (so did) the Divines and the scholars as they were required to

guard (part) of the Book of Allah, and they were witnesses thereof: The Divines, that is, those scholars whose knowledge and action were exclusively devoted to God (if the word is derived from *al-Rab* (Lord); it may also be taken to mean those scholars who train and raise up people by their knowledge (if it is derived from *al-Tarbiyah* (to raise up)). *al-Ahbār* are those knowledgeable and expert scholars who judge according to the divine order, and who guard the shariah as contained in the Book of God; and because they were its guardians and preservers, they were called its witnesses; the sacred book was safe from change and alteration because they had memorized it perfectly. The clause: "and they were witnesses thereof," is a sort of result of the phrase: "as they were required to guard (part) of the Book of God." In other words, they were told to guard it, so they were guarding it by being its witnesses.

This meaning of witnessing is supported by the context. Some people have said that it refers to attesting about the Prophet's judgement of stoning that it is found in the Torah; some others have said that it means testifying for the Book that it has come from God. But the context does not support either of these two interpretations in any way.

... therefore fear not the people and fear Me, and barter not My signs for a small price: It branches out from the clause: "Surely We sent down the Torah in which was guidance and light; with it the prophets ..." Meaning: As the Torah was sent down by Us, and it contained the laws with which the prophets, the divines and the scholars judged between you, therefore you should not hide anything of it nor should you make any alteration in it, be it for fear or for greed. As for fear, it may happen, if you fear the people and forget your Lord; but you should fear God only, it will liberate you from people's fear; and as for greed, it may take place if you barter the signs of God for a small price, like worldly riches or glory—all of which is transitory and ephemeral.

There is also another possibility: It could have branched out from the phrase: "as they were required to guard (part) of the Book of God, and they were witnesses thereof"; because the requirement to guard the Book is tantamount to take covenant for guarding it. Thus the meaning will be as follows: We made covenant with them for guarding the Book and made them witnesses for it, that they would not change it, would not be afraid of anyone except Me in making it known and would not barter My signs for small price. God says: *And when Allah made a covenant with those who were given the Book: You shall certainly make it known to men and you*

shall not hide it; but they cast it behind their backs and took a small price for it; ... (3:187). *Then there came after them an evil posterity who inherited the Book, taking only the frail good of this low life and saying: "It will be forgiven us." And if the like good came to them, they would take it (too). Was not a promise taken from them in the Book that they would not speak anything about Allah but the truth, and they have read what is in it? And the abode of the hereafter is better for those who guard (against evil). Do you not then understand? And (as for) those who hold fast by the Book and keep up prayer; surely We do not waste the reward of the right-doers* (7:169–70).

And this second meaning is more appropriate, keeping in view the forceful emphasis at the end piece of the subsequent verse: *and whoever did not judge by what Allah revealed, those are they that are unjust.*

وَكَتَبْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ فِيهَا أَنَّ النَّفْسَ بِالنَّفْسِ وَالْعَيْنَ بِالْعَيْنِ وَالْأَنْفَ بِالْأَنْفِ
وَالْأُذُنَ بِالْأُذُنِ وَالسِّنَّ بِالسِّنِّ وَالْجُرُوحَ قِصَاصٌ ۚ فَمَنْ تَصَدَّقَ بِهِ فَهُوَ
كَفَّارَةٌ لَهُ ۚ وَمَنْ لَمْ يَحْكُمْ بِمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ ﴿٤٥﴾

(5:45) ***And We prescribed to them in it that life is for life, and eye for eye, and nose for nose, and ear for ear, and tooth for tooth, and (that there is) reprisal in wounds; but he who foregoes it, it shall be an expiation for him; and whoever did not judge by what Allah revealed, those are they that are the unjust.***

The context, and especially or the mention of reprisal in wounds proves that the aim here is to describe the law of retribution in various types of felonies, like murder, cutting wounding. The contraposition in "life for life" and subsequent phrases places the avenger against the felon. It means that a life is taken in retaliation for life, an eye in reprisal of eye and so on. *Ba* (for) is used here for exchange, as you say: "I sold it for so much."

These sentences, then, give the following meaning: A life would be taken in place of a life, an eye would be gouged for an eye, a nose would be cut for a nose, an ear would be severed for an ear, a tooth would be extracted for a tooth and there is reprisal in wounds. In short, all limbs and organs of man shall be avenged with similar limb and organ of the felon.

Probably that is the purpose of the suggestion offered by someone that: "life is for life," actually has an omitted but understood predicate, 'avenged' or 'killed'. Otherwise, there is no need of this supposition; sentences are

grammatically complete without that addition.

The verse is not without a certain indication that this law is other than that for which they had come to the Prophet and which has been mentioned in preceding verses; because the context has changed with the verse: *Surely We sent down the Torah in which was guidance and light.*

The law described in the verse under discussion is found in the present Torah, as will be quoted in the forthcoming "Traditions," God willing.

... but he who foregoes it, it shall be an expiation for him; and whoever did not judge by what Allah revealed, those are they that are the unjust: If the possessor of the right of retribution, like the heir of the slain, the victim of attack himself or the wounded forgives the felon and remits the retribution, then "it," that is, this remission shall be an expiation for the sins of the remitter; or it shall be an expiation for the felon in that particular felony.

The meaning therefore is as follows: If the holder of the right of retaliation forgives the culprit, it shall be expiation for him; but if he does not forgive then he must decide according to the law revealed regarding retaliation; and whoever does not judge by what God has revealed, those are the unjust people.

It clearly shows that:

First: The conjunctive: *wa* (and) in the clause: "and whoever did not judge," joins it with the clause: "but he who foregoes"; that is, it does not begin a new sentence. Also, the conjunctive, *fa* (translated here as 'but') has the import of branching out, that is, it makes the details grow from the general order of retaliation. It is not unlike another verse of retaliation, which *inter alia* says: *... but if any remission is made to any one by his (aggrieved) brother, then (the demand for the bloodwit) should be made according to the usage, and payment should be made to him in a good manner* (2:178).

Second: The clause: "and whoever did not judge by what God revealed," metaphorically puts the reason in place of its effect. The full construction shall be as follows: and if he does not forego, then he should judge by what God has revealed, because whoever did not judge by what God revealed, those are they that are the unjust.

وَقَفَّيْنَا عَلَىٰ آثَارِهِمْ بِعِيسَى ابْنِ مَرْيَمَ مُصَدِّقًا لِمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ مِنَ التَّوْرَاةِ ۖ
وَآتَيْنَاهُ الْإِنْجِيلَ فِيهِ هُدًى وَنُورٌ وَمُصَدِّقًا لِمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ مِنَ التَّوْرَاةِ

وَهُدًى وَمَوْعِظَةً لِلْمُتَّقِينَ ﴿٤٦﴾

(5:46) ***And We sent after them in their footsteps Jesus, son of Mary, verifying what was before him of the Torah and We gave him the Gospel in which was guidance and light, and verifying what was before it of Torah and a guidance and an admonition for those who are pious.***

al-Taqfiyah (to send something behind another thing); it is derived from *al-qafā* (back); *al-āthār* is plural of *al-athar* (track, trace, sign), it is mostly used for footsteps; "after them" that is, after the prophets.

The sentence: "And We sent after them in their footsteps Jesus, son of Mary," is an extended metaphor, intimating that God made Jesus to proceed on the same path on which had gone the preceding prophets; and it is the way of invitation to monotheism and submission to God.

The clause: "verifying what was before him of the Torah," makes the preceding statement clearer; it points to the fact that the call of Jesus was the same as the call of Moses (peace be on them both), without any difference at all.

***... and We gave him the Gospel in which was guidance and light, and verifying what was before it of Torah, and a guidance and an admonition for those who are pious*:** As the verses speak about the shariah of Moses, Jesus and Muḥammad (may God's blessing be on him and his progeny and on them both), and as they have been revealed concerning their Books, it proves that the Books tally with each other.

It follows that:

First: The Gospel[1] mentioned in this verse—and it means Good News—was a book revealed to Jesus; it was not merely a "good news" without a book. But God has not given any detail in His Book as to how it was revealed, contrary to what He has done regarding the Torah and the Qur'an. He says about the Torah:

He said: "O Moses! Surely I have chosen you above the people with My messages and with My words, therefore take hold of what I give to you and be of the grateful ones." And We wrote for him in the tablets admonition

1 Readers should note that in other volumes, we have translated *Injeel* as "The Evangel". Nevertheless both terms refer to the Book given to Prophet Jesus. (Pub.)

from everything and clear explanation of all things ... (7:144–5). *... he took up the tablets, and in the writing thereof was guidance and mercy for those who fear for the sake of their Lord* (7:154).

And He says especially for the Qur'an:

The Faithful Spirit has descended with it, upon your heart that you may be of the warners, in plain Arabic language (26:193–5). *Most surely it is the Word of an honored messenger, the possessor of strength, having an honorable place with the Lord of the Throne, one (to be) obeyed, and faithful in trust* (81:19–21). *In honored books, exalted, purified, in the hands of scribes, noble, virtuous* (80:13–16). Although God has not mentioned anything regarding revelation of Gospel and its particulars, yet the verse under discussion mentions its revelation to Jesus side by side with the coming down of Torah on Moses, and revelation of the Qur'an on Muḥammad (may God's blessings be on him and his progeny) and it proves that Gospel too was a book like the other two.

Second: God says about Gospel: *in which was guidance and light*, parallel to what He had said about Torah [in 5:44]: *Surely We sent down the Torah in which was guidance and light*; these words point to the cognition and laws contained in the Book. He says at the end of this very verse 5:46 [about Gospel]: *and a guidance and an admonition for those who are pious.* By putting the two phrases [about Gospel] side by side, it is understood that the guidance mentioned in the former phrase is something separate from the one mentioned in the latter phrase and which has been explained as admonition. The former guidance is related to cognition, which guides in matters of faith and belief, while the latter refers to that cognition which leads one to fear of God and piety in religion.

Now, what is meant by light? It can only mean the laws and shariah; and meditation gives support to this interpretation. The laws of religion are the light, which illuminates the path of life and man proceeds in that light to his destination. God says: *Is he who was dead then We raised him to life and made for him a light by which he walks among the people,* (6:122).

It is now clear that the guidance, mentioned first in description of the Torah and the Gospel, refers to matters of faith and belief; like Oneness of God and resurrection; and the light in both places denotes shariah and laws; while the guidance mentioned second time as attribute of the Gospel refers to sermon and admonition. And God knows better.

Also, now one may understand the reason of repetition of "guidance" in the verse; it is because the second "guidance" is different from the first

one; in the second instance, in the phrase: "a guidance and an admonition," there is an explicative apposition, inasmuch as "admonition" gives the meaning of "guidance." And God knows better.

Third: The phrase: "and verifying what was before it of Torah," as attribute of Gospel, is not a repetition for the sake of emphasis[1], etc.; rather it denotes that Gospel follows the shariah of Torah, because there was nothing in Gospel other than confirmation of Torah's shariah and call to follow it. Of course, there were a few exceptions made by Jesus, as God quotes him as saying: *... and that I may allow you part of that which has been forbidden you,* (3:50).

Its proof is seen in the next but one verse: *And We have revealed to you the Book with the truth, verifying what is before it of the Book and a guardian over it*, as will be explained in the "Commentary."

... and a guidance and an admonition for those who are pious: This clause has already been explained. It proves that the Gospel revealed to Jesus paid special care to piety, in addition to matters of belief and faith and practical laws which were found in the Torah. Although the Qur'an does not verify totally the Torah which is in their hands today; and although the four Gospels attributed to Matthew, Marks, Luke and John, are not the same Gospel which Qur'an says was revealed to Jesus himself, yet they all confirm this matter, as will be explained later, God willing.

وَلْيَحْكُمْ أَهْلُ الْإِنْجِيلِ بِمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ فِيهِ ۚ وَمَنْ لَمْ يَحْكُمْ بِمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْفَاسِقُونَ ﴿٤٧﴾

(5:47) *And the People of the Gospel should have judged by what Allah revealed in it; and whoever did not judged by what Allah revealed, those are they that are the transgressors.*

God had revealed in the Gospel confirmation and verification of the Torah in its laws, except some abrogated rules which were described in the Book revealed to Jesus; obviously when Gospel verified the laws of Torah and made lawful some things which had been forbidden in it, then following the Torah in its laws—except those unlawful things which were

1 In fact, there is no repetition at all. The first clause: *And We sent ... Jesus ..., verifying what was before him*, is an attribute of Jesus, while this second one describes Gospel's position. (Trans.)

made lawful by Gospel—was tantamount to obeying the law of Gospel.

Some exegetes have claimed on the strength of this verse that Gospel too contained, like Torah, elaborated laws and shariah; but the explanation given above show the weakness of this claim.

The statement: "and whoever did not judge by what God revealed, those are they that are the transgressors," puts emphasis on the order contained in the preceding sentence: "And the people of the Gospel should have judged ..." God has repeated this sentence three times with minor difference all for emphasis; twice relating to the Jews and once regarding the Christians; as He has said: *and whoever did not judge by what Allah revealed, those are they that are the unbelievers* [5:44]. *... those are they that are the unjust* [5:45]. *... those are they that are the transgressors* [5:47]. In this way, their disbelief, injustice, and transgression have officially been put on record.

What is the reason that the Christians have been called transgressors while the Jews were described as unbelievers and unjust? It is because the Christians changed monotheism to trinity and abandoned the laws of Torah; they were misled by Paul who preached that Jesus had brought an independent religion, separate from that of Moses, and that the new religion had abrogated all laws through Jesus's atonement; thus the Christians went out of the fold of monotheism and its shariah through mistaken interpretation; so they transgressed the boundary of the true divine religion. Transgression means exit of a thing from its prescribed place, like exit of the core of date from its cover.

As for the Jews, they had no doubt whatsoever about the religion of Moses; they had rejected knowingly the laws and beliefs, which they had, full knowledge of; and it was nothing but injustice and disbelief in God's signs.

It should however be noted that the three verses, that is,: *and whoever did not judge by what Allah revealed, those are they: that are the unbelievers; that are the unjust; that are the transgressors*, are unrestricted; they are not confined to any one group, religion or nation, although here they have been applied to the People of the Book.

There is a difference of opinion among exegetes regarding the import of the unbelief of him who does not judge by what God has revealed, e.g., a judge who decides a case contrary to what God has revealed, or a ruler who rules against what God has revealed, or an innovator who invents a system other than that of divine religion. This question comes under

the purview of *fiqh*. The fact is that violation of any rule of the shariah or any other established matter of religion, when one knows that it is an established fact and then rejects it, is disbelief, if one violates it, knowing its factuality but without rejecting it, it is transgression. But of one does not know that it is an established religious matter and then rejects it, it is neither disbelief nor transgression, because it is an excusable incapability (except if there was negligence in investigation of facts and proofs). See books of *fiqh* for details.

وَأَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ مُصَدِّقًا لِمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ وَمُهَيْمِنًا عَلَيْهِ ۖ فَاحْكُمْ بَيْنَهُمْ بِمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ ۖ وَلَا تَتَّبِعْ أَهْوَاءَهُمْ عَمَّا جَاءَكَ مِنَ الْحَقِّ ۚ لِكُلٍّ جَعَلْنَا مِنْكُمْ شِرْعَةً وَمِنْهَاجًا ۚ وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ لَجَعَلَكُمْ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً وَلَٰكِنْ لِيَبْلُوَكُمْ فِي مَا آتَاكُمْ ۖ فَاسْتَبِقُوا الْخَيْرَاتِ ۚ إِلَى اللَّهِ مَرْجِعُكُمْ جَمِيعًا فَيُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ فِيهِ تَخْتَلِفُونَ ﴿٤٨﴾

(5:48) ***And We have revealed to you the Book with the truth, verifying what is before it of the Book and a guardian over it*** (**Haymanah**)***, therefore judge between them by what Allah has revealed, and do not follow their (low) desires (diverging) from the truth that has come to you; for every one of you did We appoint a law and a way, and if Allah had pleased He would have made you (all) a single people, but that He might try you in what He gave you, therefore strive with one another to hasten to virtuous deeds; to Allah is the return, of all of you, then He will let you know that in which you differed;***

Haymanah of a thing over another thing entails its authority over it, involving its protection, safety and management. This describes the position of the Qur'an, which God says is explanation of everything vis-à-vis the previous divine books. It preserves from those books' contents, the permanent unchangeable fundamentals and abrogates what deserves it from the subsidiary items that are liable to change and alteration, in order to make it conform to man's position, keeping in view his step-by-step development and perfection with passage of time. God says: *Surely this Qur'an guides to that which is most upright* (17:9). *Whatever signs We abrogate or cause to be forgotten, We bring one better than it or like it* (2:106).

Those who follow the Messenger, the Prophet, the Ummī, whom they find written down with them in the Torah and the Gospel, (who) enjoins them good and forbids them evil, and makes lawful to them the good things and makes unlawful to them impure things, and removes from them their burden and the shackles which were upon them; so (as for) those who believe in him and honor him and help him, and follow the light which has been sent down with him, these it is that are the successful (7:157).

The phrase: "a guardian over it," is an explanatory conclusion of the preceding, *verifying what is before it of the Book*; without it the mention of verification could cause a misunderstanding that the Qur'an confirmed the laws of the Torah and the Gospel and let them continue without any change; but with this phrase in place, the verification only means that the Qur'an accepts that those laws and cognitive matters had truly come from God and God has full power to manage them as He pleases, He may abrogate them or may complete them with other laws, as He points to it in this very verse: *and if Allah had pleased He would have made you (all) a single people, but that He might try you in what He gave you.*

Therefore, the words: "verifying what is before it," mean that the Qur'an has kept intact that part of the law and knowledge of Gospel which were suitable for this *ummah*, as such the consequent addition, omission or abrogation was not contrary to this verification—in the same way as Jesus and his Gospel had verified the Torah even when they had made lawful some things prohibited by the Torah, as God quotes him as saying: *And a verifier of that which is before me of the Torah and that I may allow you part of that which has been forbidden you ...* (3:50).

... therefore judge between them by what Allah has revealed, and do not follow their (low) desires (diverging) from the truth that has come to you: As the shariah, which has been revealed to you and is contained in the Book, is truth, and as it is truth when it tallies with the Books revealed earlier, and is truth when it goes against those Books, because it is a guardian over them, therefore you are inevitably required to judge between the People of the Book (as is apparently supported by the preceding verses), or between the people (as is supported by following verses), *by what Allah has revealed to you*; you should not follow their desires or turn away from the truth that has come to you.

The above discourse shows that the pronoun in: "judge between them," may refer to the People of the Book or to the people in general. But the first alternative necessitates taking the phrase as meaning, judge between

them if you decide to judge, because God had not obligated him to judge between the People of the Book, but had left it to his discretion whether he wanted to judge or turned aside from them. He says: *therefore if they come to you, judge between them or turn aside from them* [5:42]. Moreover, God has at the beginning of this set of verses, mentioned the hypocrites together with the Jews. So there is no reason why the pronoun, "them," should be taken to refer to the Jews only when another group was mentioned together with them. Therefore, looking at it in this context, the second alternative seems more appropriate, that is, judge between the people.

Obviously, the words: "do not follow their desires from the truth," are well connected and they imply divergence from the truth.

... for every one of you did We appoint a law and a way: al-Rāghib says: "*al-Shar*ʾ is the way of a clear path; it is said: 'I opened for him a path.' *al-Shar*ʾ is a *masdar*, then it was used as a noun for open path; it is pronounced *al-shir*ʾ, *al-shar*ʾ and *al-shariah*; then it was used for the divine path; God says: *a law and a way ...* Some people have said, 'The shariah was given this name to liken it to drinking place.'"

Probably, the case is vice versa, that is, the drinking place was the original meaning which was then borrowed for the law; because they knew clearly the ways to water holes, etc. which were frequently visited by them. And he has said: "*al-Nahj* is clear path; *nahaj al-amr* and *anhaja* both mean the matter became clear; *manhaj* and *minhāj* of path mean open road."

Meaning of *Shariah* and Difference Between *Shariah*, *Din* and *Millah* in Qur'anic Usage

Shariah, as you have seen, means path and religion; likewise *millah* is an adopted path. However, apparently the Qur'an uses the word, shariah in a meaning more particular than *dīn* (religion). For proof, see the verse: *Surely the religion with Allah is Islam* (3:19). *And whoever seeks a religion other than Islam, it shall not be accepted from him, and in the hereafter he shall be one of the losers* (3:85); when read together with the verse under discussion: *for every one of you did We appoint a law and a way*, and the verse: *Then We have made you follow a course in the affair, therefore follow it ...* (45:18).

Thus, shariah is the way prepared for an *ummah* or a prophet who was sent with it, as we say, shariah of Noah, shariah of Abraham, shariah of Moses, shariah of Jesus and shariah of Muḥammad; and religion is the

divine course and system which covers all nations; so shariah is liable to abrogation but not religion in its wider sense.

There is one more difference: Religion is attributed to singular or plural whatever their position; but shariah is not attributed to a singular unless it be its Legislator or its principle head who manages it. They say: Muslims' religion, Jews' religion, Muslims' shariah, Jews' shariah; again they say: God's religion, God's shariah, Muḥammad's religion, Muḥammad's shariah; Also they say: Zayd's religion, ʿAmr's religion, but they never say: Zayd's shariah or ʿAmr's shariah. May be it is so because the term, shariah, carries a hint of incidental happening, an allusion of preparing and paving the path. It is perfectly right to say: the path prepared by God, the way laid down for the prophet or for a certain *ummah*; but it is not right to say: the way which was laid down for Zayd, because Zayd has no particular connection to it.

In any case, it is inferred from the above that shariah's meaning is more particular than that of religion. As for the verse, 42:13 (*He has prescribed for you of the religion what He enjoined upon Noah, and that which We have revealed to you, and that which We enjoined upon Abraham and Moses and Jesus ...*), it does not go against it, because it shows that the shariah of Muḥammad, laid down for his *ummah* is the sum total of what was enjoined upon Noah, Abraham, Moses and Jesus (peace be upon them), added to what was revealed to Muḥammad. It is either an allusion to the fact that Islam [is a comprehensive religion which] combines the merits of all previous shariah plus the excellence of Muḥammad's revelation, or it aims at proving that all the laws do have a single reality and essence, even though they were somewhat different among themselves because the people for whom they were sent had different [intellectual and social] standards; as is hinted or proved by the words of verse 13 of chapter 42 coming after the clause quoted above: *... that establish the religion and be not divided therein*. Religion is one and unalterable, while laws differ [from nation to nation, time to time, and] are liable to abrogation. The relationship of a particular shariah with religion is like that of minor rules of Islam (with their abrogator and abrogated ones) with the basic religion. God has not obligated His servants except to adhere to one religion, that is, submission to Him; but He has taken them to that destination through different paths, legislating for them various systems according to their various abilities, and these are the laws of Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Muḥammad (may God's blessing be upon him and his progeny and on

them); exactly as He sometimes abrogated within one shariah some laws replacing them with others because the abrogated law had lost its benefit and the abrogator one had become more appropriate and beneficial. See for example the replacement of the punishment of life-imprisonment for a fornicators with flogging and stoning, etc. This is proved by the divine words: a*nd if Allah had pleased He would have made you (all) a single people, but that He might try you in what He gave you ...*

As for *millah*, it is as though it points to norms and customs observed by people in their lives; and it probably has a shade of meaning of *imlāʾ* and *imlāl* that is, 'dictation'; as such it would be a custom handed down by others; its root meaning is not so clear; therefore more likely it is synonymous to shariah inasmuch as, contrary to religion, *millah* like shariah denotes a system and way related to a particular group; yet there is difference between the two: shariah is used for the system or way keeping in view the reality that it has been laid down by God for people's use; while *millah* is used for the system as it is handed down practically among the people generation after generation. Probably that is the reason that *millah* is not ascribed to God in genitive construction, that is, they never say, *millah* of God, while they say, religion of God, shariah of God.

However, it is ascribed to a prophet to denote his tradition and habit, or to an *ummah* because they follow and observe that custom and tradition. God says: *... the millah of Abraham, the upright one, and he was not of the polytheists* (2:135); and God quotes Joseph as saying: *surely I have forsaken the millah of a people who do not believe in Allah, and they are deniers of the hereafter; and I follow the millah of my fathers, Abraham and Isaac and Jacob ...* (12:37-38). And He quotes the unbelievers' threat to their prophets:

... We will most certainly drive you forth from our land, or else you shall come back into our millah ... (14:13).

It is thus seen that *dīn* (religion) in Qur'anic usage is more general than shariah and *millah*; and these two are synonymous, with some difference in their usage.

Commentary continues:

***... and if Allah had pleased He would have made you (all) a single people, but that He might try you in what He gave you*:** It gives the reason why there were sent various laws. Making all a single people does not mean making them a single species, because all of them already belong to a single species living in the same way, as God says: *And were it not that all*

people would have been a single nation, We would certainly have assigned to those who disbelieve in the Beneficent God (to make) of silver the roofs of their houses and the stairs by which they ascend (43:33).

Rather it means treating whole mankind as a single people considering them to be on a single level of intellectual capacity and social behavior, in which case a single set of laws would have been made for all, because of proximity of their ranks. Accordingly, the clause: "if God had pleased He would have made you (all) a single people," has metaphorically put the reason of condition in place of condition; the idea is to make the meaning of the following clause clearer: "but that He might try you in what He gave you," that is, He might test you with the favors He bestowed on you. Naturally, the favors, pointed to in the verse, differed from nation to nation. The differences were not based on their habitations, languages and colors, because God had never sent more than one shariah in one period; rather the differences occurred by passage of time because of man's gradual development intellectually and socially. Divinely prescribed responsibilities and laid down laws are but means of trial with which God tests man in various stages of life. In other words He brings man's potential to fulfilment, be it on the side of felicity or infelicity. You may say that it is done for differentiating the party of God from the party of Satan. These different expressions used above have been taken from the divine Book, and sum total of all is the same. God says keeping in view the aspect of test: *... and We bring these days to men by turns and that Allah may know those who believe and take witnesses from among you; and Allah loves not the unjust; and that Allah may purge those who believe and eradicate the unbelievers. Do you think that you will enter the Garden while Allah has not yet known those who strive hard from among you, and (He has not) known the patient!* (3:140–2). There are many verses of this theme.

As for the bringing man's potential to fulfilment, God says: *So if there comes to you guidance from Me, then whoever follows My guidance, he shall not go astray nor be unhappy. And whoever turns away from My remembrance, his shall surely be a straitened life, and We will raise him, on the Day of Resurrection, blind* (20:123–4).

And He says regarding the third aspect (that is, distinguishing the party of God from that of Satan): *And when your Lord said to the angels: "Surely I am going to create a mortal of the essence of black mud fashioned in shape ..."* [Satan] *said: "My Lord! Because Thou hast left me to stray, I will certainly make (evil) fair seeming to them on earth, and I will certainly*

cause them all to deviate, except Thy servants from among them, the freed ones." He said: "This is a straight path with Me: Surely as regards My servants, thou hast no authority over them except those who follow thee of the deviators. And surely Hell is the promised place of them all." (15:28–43). There are many such verses.

In short, God had bestowed on mankind different types of capabilities and potentialities in different times and eras; also the divine laws, whose enforcement among them was essential in order to complete their lives' felicity were sent for man's test which varies according to the variance in examinees' abilities—all these factors together had caused difference in various laws. That is why God has said that this difference of laws has happened because He has wished to test and examine you in what He has bestowed on you of His favors, as He says: *for every one of you did We appoint a law and a way, and if Allah had pleased He would have made you (all) a single people*.

The meaning of this verse is then as follows, and God knows better: For each nation from among you We have laid down and legislated a different law and distinct way; if God had pleased He would have made you (creatively) a single nation and legislated for you a single set of law. But He has laid down for you different laws in order to test you in what He has given you of various favors. This difference in favors demanded difference in test (which in their turn) give rise to divine laws and legislations. Naturally there was difference in various laws.

The different nations mentioned here are those of Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Muḥammad (may God's blessing be upon him and his progeny and on them) as He says describing His favors on this *ummah*: *He has prescribed for you of the religion what He enjoined upon Noah and that which We have revealed to you, and that which We enjoined upon Abraham and Moses and Jesus* ... (42:13).

***... therefore strive with one another to hasten to virtuous deeds; to Allah is the return of all of you, then He will let you know that in which you differed*:** *al-Istibāq* (to vie, to compete) is derived from the root *al-Sabq* (to get ahead of some one); *al-marjaʾ* (return) is a *masdar* derived from *al-rujūʾ* (return). The speech has branched out as a concomitant from the preceding: *for every one of you did We appoint a law and a way.* The meaning: And We have prescribed for you this true shariah which is superior to all previous ones, and it contains your good and welfare, therefore you should vie with each other to hasten to good deeds, that is,

the divinely prescribed laws and responsibilities; you should not entangle yourselves in the differences that are there between you and the others, because all of you are to return to your Lord, and then He will let you know that in which you differed, and will judge between you clearly and decide with justice.

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وَأَنِ احْكُمْ بَيْنَهُمْ بِمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ وَلَا تَتَّبِعْ أَهْوَاءَهُمْ وَاحْذَرْهُمْ أَنْ
يَفْتِنُوكَ عَنْ بَعْضِ مَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ إِلَيْكَ ۖ فَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَاعْلَمْ أَنَّمَا يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ
أَنْ يُصِيبَهُمْ بِبَعْضِ ذُنُوبِهِمْ ۗ وَإِنَّ كَثِيرًا مِنَ النَّاسِ لَفَاسِقُونَ ﴿٤٩﴾

(5:49) ***And that you should judge between them by what Allah has revealed, and do not follow their low desires, and be cautious of them, lest they seduce you from part of what Allah has revealed to you; but if they turn back then know that Allah desires to afflict them on account of some of their faults; and most surely many of the people are transgressors.***

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The beginning of the verse: "And that you should judge between them by what God has revealed, and do not follow their low desires," corresponds with the clause in the preceding verse: *therefore judge between them by what Allah has revealed, and do not follow their (low) desires*; then the two separate in their ramifications, and one realizes that the repetition has occurred for this purpose. The former verse tells them to judge by what God has revealed and admonishes them not to follow their low desires—because this shariah revealed by God is the one prescribed for the Prophet and his people. Therefore, it is incumbent upon them to vie with one another in virtuous deeds. The latter verse orders them to judge by what God has revealed and not to follow their low desires—explaining that if they turned back from what God has revealed, it would show that God has left them in their error on account of their transgression. God has said: ... *He causes many to err by it and many He leads aright by it; but He does not cause to err by it (any) except the transgressors* (2:26).

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It results from the above that this verse elaborates some themes of the preceding verse which needed more explanation: The only reason that people of low desire turn away from following what God has revealed with truth is that they are transgressors; God desires to afflict them on account of some of their sins which have caused their transgression. This

affliction apparently means that He leaves them to err. Thus the clause: "And that you should judge between them by what God has revealed," is in conjunction, as has been said, with the word, "Book," in the preceding verse's opening sentence: *And We have revealed to you the Book* ... In that case, it is more appropriate to take the *al* (the) in, "the Book," as connoting a new occurrence; the meaning then will be as follows: We have revealed to you the laws which have been prescribed for them, and that you should judge between them by what God has revealed.

and be cautious of them, lest they seduce you from part of what God has revealed to you: Here God warns His Prophet against their seduction and temptation, although he *was maʾsūm* and sinless through divine protection. It is because the power of *ʿismah* (sinlessness) does not nullify the free will and choice, nor does it repeal the laws based on that will and choice. *Ismah* is in fact an academic and intellectual aptitude; knowledge and perception do not deprive practical powers and faculties from their middle position between doing and not doing. It is these faculties, which move the limbs and organs of a man and cause his activities.

For example, a sure knowledge that a certain food is poisoned prevents man from taking that food. But the organs used in eating, like hand, mouth, tongue, and teeth may perform their activities in this eating, or they may remain inert although they could possibly become active; so the action is within power, although it has become like impossible to do because of that knowledge.

We have written to some extent on this topic when explaining the verse: ... *and they shall not harm you in any way, and Allah has revealed to you the Book and the Wisdom, and He has taught you what you did not know, and Allah's grace on you is very great* (4:113). "But if they turn back, then know that God desires to afflict them on account of some of their faults": As mentioned above, it describes that they were left to err because of their transgression. This clause reverts to the initial theme of this set of verses, where it says: *O Messenger! Let not those grieve you who strive together in hastening in unbelief* ... [5:41]. The verse aims at putting the Prophet's mind at rest and cheers him up; it teaches him that which would keep grief and sorrow away from his heart. This is what God has done in most of the places where He has told him not to grieve if the unbelievers turn away from the true Call or disdain to accept, that which would lead them to the path of guidance and success. So God explained to him that they were not going to weaken the kingdom of God, nor were

they to overwhelm Him; it is God Who is dominant in His affairs; it is He Who leaves them to err because of their transgression, makes their hearts deviated because of their deviation, and puts uncleanness on them by removing His help from them and luring them into evil. God says: *And let not those who disbelieve think that they shall come in first; surely they will not escape* (8:59). So, as all matters are in God's hand, and He drives away all types of uncleanness from His clean religion, so nothing can escape from Him if He wants it; therefore there was no cause to grieve, as nothing was lost.

Probably, that is the reason that God has said: "but if they turn back, then know that God desires to afflict them on account of some of their faults"; instead of saying, 'but if they turn back, then God desires . . .' or some other expression to that effect. In its present structure the verse intends to teach the Prophet that their turning back is caused by divine subjugation, as such it should not cause grief to the Prophet; he is a Messenger inviting people to the way of his Lord; if anything grieves him it should do so because God's will is predominant in the affairs of religious Call. As nothing can overcome God's will, and it is He Who leads them here and there by His subjugation, helping some and leaving some in their deception, therefore there was no reason to be grieved.

God has explained this reality in other words: *Then may be you will kill yourself with grief, sorrowing after them, if they do not believe in this announcement. Surely We have made whatever is on the earth an embellishment for it, so that We may try them (as to) which of them is best in deed. And most surely We will make what is on it bare ground without herbage.* (18:6-8) Thus God has made it clear that the aim of sending messengers, and their coming with religious warning and good news was not that all people should enter into the fold of true religion, as a man plans and thinks concerning his requirements and needs. The only purpose of this all is to test the people and put them on trial, so that it may be known who is best in deed. Otherwise, this world and all that is in it is going to perish very soon, nothing will remain except a bare ground, free from these disbelievers who turn away from the speech of truth, and cleansed from all their hearts' attachments. So, there is no reason to be sorry, because it is not going to bring any failure in Our endeavours, nullify Our power or cause weariness in Our will.

... and most surely many of the people are transgressors: As mentioned earlier, it gives the reason of the preceding sentence: *then know that Allah*

desires to afflict them on account of some of their sins.

أَفَحُكْمَ الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ يَبْغُونَ ۚ وَمَنْ أَحْسَنُ مِنَ اللَّهِ حُكْمًا لِقَوْمٍ يُوقِنُونَ ﴿٥٠﴾

(5:50) ***Is it then the judgement of (the times of) ignorance that they desire? And who is better than Allah to judge for a people who are sure?***

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This question branches out from the theme of the preceding verse that describes their turning back from what is in reality the judgement of God that was revealed to them and which, they knew very well, was truth. Also possibly the verse may be taken as the conclusion of the themes of previous verses.

Its meaning: As these laws and rules are the truth revealed by God, and as other than these there is no true shariah, there is nothing besides them except the system of the days of ignorance, emanating from low desires. What do these people, who turn aside from judgement of truth, want after all? There is noting else except the judgement of the Days of Ignorance. Do they then want that judgement, when there is no one better than God to judge for these people who claim to be believers?

So, the sentence: "Is it the judgement of (the time of) ignorance that they desire?" is a reprimand in the form of question; and: "who is better than God to judge?" Is a question with implied negative reply, that is, no one is better than God to judge, and a judgement is followed because of its good. The clause: "for a people who are sure," is an insinuation to them that if they are truthful in their claim of believing in God, then they are sure of His signs; and those who are sure of His signs deny that any one can be better than God in judgement.

It should be noted that these verses in several places turn from singular or plural first person pronoun to that of third person and *vice versa*. For example, the clause: *surely Allah loves those who judge equitably*, followed by: *Surely We sent down Torah, which is followed by: as they were required to guard (part) of the Book of Allah*, after which comes: *and fear Me*, and so on. Whenever the third person uses the proper Divine Name: God, it reflects on the importance of the subject. Where the first person singular pronoun is used, it shows that all affairs are in the hand of God alone, without any interference from any friend or intercessor. If the verse speaks of any good promise or attraction, it is God who is going to manage it and He is the Most Noble of those who fulfil their promise. If it contains

a threat or warning then it is really most troublesome and hardest and no friend or intercessor can avert it from man, because the matter is in God's hand alone. And He [by using singular pronoun] has nullified every intermediate link and rejected every intervening cause. Ponder on it; and some aspects of it have been described earlier.

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Examining Narrations

(1) *Majmaʾ al-bayān* narrates under the verse: *O Messenger! Let not those grieve you who strive together in hastening in unbelief ...*, from al-Baqir that he said, "A woman of high status in Khaybar committed adultery with a man of high rank from among them—and both had spouses. So they did not like to stone them. They sent (some one) to the Jews of Medina and wrote to them to ask the Prophet about it, hoping that he would allow them some latitude. So a group of them, including Kaʾb b. al-Ashraf, Kaʾb b. Usayd, Shuʾbah b. ʿAmr, Mālik b. al-Sayf and Kinānah b. Abi al-Haqīq, etc., went (to the Prophet,) and said, 'O Muḥammad! Tell us about a fornicator and a fornicatress, when they have their spouses, what is the prescribed punishment for them?' He said, 'And will you agree to my judgement in this?' They said, 'Yes.' So Gabriel came down with (the order of) stoning. (The Prophet) told it to them; they refused to accept it. Gabriel said, 'Make Ibn Sūriyā (arbitrator) between you and them;' and gave his particulars to (the Prophet).

"So the Prophet said, 'Do you know a young man, beardless, white, one-eyed, who lives in Fadak and is called Ibn Sūriyā?' They said, 'Yes.' He said, 'What position does he have among you? They said, '(He is) the most knowledgeable Jew (living on the face of the earth) of what God had revealed to Moses.' He said, 'Then you send (message) to call him.' They did so, and ʿAbdullāh b. Sūriyā came to them.

"So the Prophet said to him, 'I adjure you by God, that which there is no god but He, and Who sent down Torah to Moses, and parted the sea for you, and delivered you and drowned the people of Pharaoh, and made the clouds to give shade over you and sent to you manna and quails, do you find in your Book (the punishment of) stoning for the one who commits adultery while having a spouse?' Ibn Sūriyā said, 'Yes. By Him Whom you have

reminded me, if it were not for the fear that the Lord of Torah would burn me down if I lied or changed, I would not have confessed to you. However, (now) you tell me how it is in your Book, O Muḥammad!' He said, 'When four witnesses of approved probity testify that he had entered into her as kohl stick enters kohl container, then he becomes liable to stoning.' Ibn Sūriyā said, 'Exactly like it had God revealed to Moses in Torah.'

Then the Prophet said to him, 'What was the first time you became lax in the judgement of God?' He said, '[It was our custom that] when a man of status committed adultery, we did nothing to him, and when a weak person did so, we enforced the punishment to him; thus fornication increased in our high class society, until a cousin of one of our kings committed adultery and we did not subject him to stoning. Then another man committed the same and the King wanted to stone him. But the man's people told the King, "Never, until you stone that person, that is, the King's cousin." So we said, "Come together, so that we lay down something below stoning that will be applied to men of high and low status both." Thus we laid down flogging and *tahmīm*, that is, the fornicator and fornicatress should each be flogged forty strokes, then their faces be blackened, and they be put on two donkeys their faces being towards the donkey's posterior, and they be made to go round (the town). They prescribed it in place of stoning.'

"The Jews then said to Ibn Sūriyā, 'How quickly you told him (everything); you did not deserve what we had said about you, but you were absent, and we did not like to slander your reputation.' He said, 'He adjured me by Torah, otherwise I would not have informed him.'

The Prophet gave his judgement and the two were stoned near the door of his mosque. And he said, 'I am the first to revive your judgement when they had made it dead.' Then God revealed in this connection: *O People of the Book! Indeed has come to you Our Messenger making clear to you much of what you concealed of the Book and passing over much.* Then Ibn Sūriyā stood up and put his hands on the knees of the Messenger of God and said, 'This is the place of the one who seeks protection by God and you, that you should not mention to us the "much" which you have been told to pass over.' So the Prophet did not mention it.

"Then Ibn Sūriyā asked him about his sleep. He (the Prophet) said, 'My eyes sleep but my heart does not sleep.' He said, 'You said the truth; now tell me (why) a child resembles his father and has no resemblance with his mother at all, or resembles his mother without having any resemblance to his father.' He said, 'The water of whichever of the parents tops that of the other, his or her resemblance will prevail.' He said, 'You said the truth; now tell me which parts of the child belong to the man and which to the woman?'" (The Imam), said, "Then the Messenger of God went into trance for a long time; then he came out of it, with ruddy face and pouring sweat; and he said, 'Flesh, blood, nail and fat belong to the woman, and bone, sinew and veins belong to the man.' He said, 'You said the truth; your affairs are those of a prophet.'

"So Ibn Sūriyā accepted Islam at this stage. And he said, 'O Muḥammad! Which of the angels comes to you?' He said, 'Gabriel. He said, 'Describe his attributes to me; and the Prophet described it.' He said, 'I bear witness that he is in Torah as you have said and that you are truly the Messenger of God.'

"When Ibn Sūriyā accepted Islam, the Jews quarrelled with him and abused him.

"When they wanted to leave, Banū Qurayzah caught the hold of Banu al-Nadīr and said, 'O Muḥammad! (These are) our brothers, Banu al-Nadīr, our father is one, and our religion is one, and our prophet is one. When they slay one of us, (the slain one) is not avenged [that is, his killer is not killed], rather they give us his blood money seventy *wasaq*[1] of date; and when we slay one of them, they kill the killer and take from us double the amount, one hundred and forty *wasaq* of date. If the slain one is a woman, they kill (in her retaliation) one of our men, and (they kill) two of our men in place of their one man, and one of our free men in place of their slave; and our wounds are recompensed at half of their wounds. Therefore, you judge between them and us. So, God revealed the verse about stoning and retaliation.'"

Author's comments: al-Tabrisī has also narrated in *Majmaʾ al-bayān*, through a group of exegetes, in addition to his narration from al-Bāqir. Also, there are traditions in Sunnī *tafsīrs* and collections of *ahādīth*,

1 A weight (Trans.)

somewhat nearer to the beginning of the above story, narrated through several chains from Abū Hurayrah, Barāʾ b. ʿÃzib, ʿAbdullāh b. ʿUmar, Ibn ʿAbbās and others. The traditions are nearer in meaning to each other. The end part of the tradition has been narrated in *al-Durr al-manthūr* from ʿAbd b. Hamīd and Abu al-Shaykh from Qatādah, and from Ibn Jarīr, Ibn Ishāq, al-Tabarānī, Ibn

Abī Shaybah, Ibn al-Mundhir and others from Ibn ʿAbbās.

As for the confirmation (in the tradition) by Ibn Sūriyā that the order of stoning was found in the Torah, and that it was the meaning of the verse: *And how do they make you a judge and they have the Torah*, it is also supported by the fact that nearly similar order is found in the Torah which is prevalent among them, as may be seen in the Deuteronomy, ch. 22, vs. 22–24:

> If a man be found lying with a woman married to a husband, then they shall both of them die, *both* the man that lay with the woman, and the woman: so shalt thou put away evil from Israel.
> If a damsel *that* is a virgin be betrothed unto an husband, and a man find her in the city, and lay with her;
> Then ye shall bring them both out unto the gate of that city, and ye shall stone them with stones that they die; the damsel, because she cried not, *being* in the city; and the man, because he hath humbled his neighbor's wife: so thou shalt put away evil from among you.[1]

As you have seen, this reserves stoning for some eventualities. As for the report in the tradition that they had also asked the Messenger of God about the law of blood money, apart from their question regarding the law of adultery, it has been written earlier that the verses are not without some support to it. As for the order of retaliation of slaying and wounding which the verse says was prescribed in the Torah, this too is found in the present Torah, as may be seen in Exodus, ch. 21, vs. 12-13 & 23-25:

> (12) *He that smiteth a man, so that he die, shall be surely put to death.*
> (13) *And if a man lie not in wait, but God deliver him into his hand; then I will appoint thee a place whither he shall flee.*
> (23) *And if any mischief follow, then thou shalt give life for life,*
> (24) *Eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot,*

1 These quotations as well as all others from the Old and New Testaments throughout various volumes of the English *al-Mīzān* have been taken from the Authorized (King James) Version of the Holy Bible. (Trans.)

(25) *Burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe.*

Further, the Leviticus, ch. 24, vs. 17–20, says:

(17) *And he that killeth any man shall surely be put to death.*

(18) *And he that killeth a beast shall make it good; beast for beast.*

(19) *And if a man causes a blemish in his neighbor; as he hath done, so shall it be done to him;*

(20) *Breach for breach, eye for eye, tooth for tooth: as he hath caused a blemish in a man, so shall it be done to him again.*

(2) al-Suyūtī narrates through Ahmad, Abū Dāwūd, Ibn Jarīr, Ibn al-Mundhir, al-Tabarānī, Abu al-Shaykh and Ibn Marduwayh from Ibn ʿAbbās that he said, "Surely God revealed: *and whoever did not judge by what Allah revealed, those are they that are the unbelievers. ... that are the unjust. ... that are the transgressors.* He revealed it about two groups of the Jews, one of them subdued the other in the Era of Ignorance, until they reconciliated and made peace (on the condition) that if the mighty group slew someone of the weaker group, his blood money should be fifty *wasaq*, and if the weaker one slew a member of the mighty group, his blood money should be a hundred *wasaq*. This continued until the Messenger of God came to Medina. The two groups came down to welcome the Messenger of God, and he had not over-powered them yet. Then the weaker group stood up and said, 'Was there ever such a thing between two tribes? Their religion is one, their lineage is one and their town is one and (yet) blood money of one is half of that of the other? Certainly, we had given it to you only because of the injustice you did to us and in fear of you. But now that Muḥammad has arrived, we shall not give in to you.' War was almost to erupt between them, and then they agreed to make the Messenger of God (Arbitrator) between them. Then the mighty group thought it over and said, 'By God! Muḥammad is not going to give you from them the double of what he would give them from you;' and they have truly said that they had not given it to us but because of (our) injustice and coercion to them. So, they engaged in secret intrigue against the Messenger of God. God informed His Messenger of all their affairs and what they wanted. Then God revealed: *O Messenger! Let not those grieve you who strive together ... and most surely many of the people are transgressors.*" [5:41-49]

Then he said, "By God! It was revealed about them." (*al-Durr al-manthūr*)

Author's comments: al-Qummī has narrated this story inter alia in a lengthy tradition in his *al-Tafsīr*; and it says that it was ʿAbdullāh b. Ubayy who talked on behalf of Banu al-Nadīr—and it was the mighty one—and tried to frighten the Messenger of God of them, and that it was he who had said: *If you are given this, take it, and if you are not given this, be cautious.*

But the first tradition is truer in text, because its meaning is more in conformity with the context of the verses; the first parts of the verses—particularly the first two—do not fit the story of the blood money between Banu al-Nadīr and Banū Qurayzah, as is not hidden from a person who recognizes the literary styles. It is not unlikely that it is an attempt to apply the story to the Qur'an, as is the case with a lot of traditions purporting to describe the reason of revelation of verses. It is as though the narrator found this story applicable to the verse: *And We prescribed to them in it that life is for life,* and preceding ones; then he found that the verses are connected with one another beginning from: *O Messenger! Let not those grieve you who strive together ...* so he took all these verses as revealed in this story, and became oblivious of the story of stoning. And God knows better.

(3) Sulaymān b. Khālid said, "I heard Abū ʿAbdillāh, saying, 'When God intends good for a servant, He scratches up a white spot in his heart, and deputes to him an angel who keeps him on right (path); and when He intends evil for a servant, He scratches up a black spot in his heart, and closes the hearing of his heart, and deputes to him a Satan who leads him astray.' Then he recited this verse: *Therefore (for) whomsoever Allah intends that He would guide him aright, He expands his breast for Islam; and (for) whosoever He intends that He should leave him to err, He makes his breast strait and narrow as though he were ascending into the sky ...* [6:125].

Then he said: *Surely those against whom the word of your Lord has proved true will not believe* [10:95]; and he said: *... Those are they for whom Allah does not desire that He should purify their hearts*; ... [5:41]." (*al-Tafsīr*, al-ʿAyyāshī)

(4) [al-Kulaynī] narrates through his chain from al-Sakūnī that Abū ʿAbdillāh said, "*al-Suht* (forbidden) is the price of dead body, and price of dog, and dowry for fornication, and bribe in judgement

and wage of *al-kāhin* (fortune teller, soothsayer)." (*al-Kāfī*)

Author's comments: The tradition describes a number of forbidden and unlawful earnings, without encompassing all such things. There are a lot of unlawful earnings as detailed in traditions. There are many traditions of this theme narrated from the Imams of *Ahl al-Bayt*.

(5) ʿAbd b. Hamīd has narrated that ʿAlī b. Abī Tālib was asked about *suht*, he said, "Bribe." It was said to him, "In judgement?" He said, "That is disbelief." (*al-Durr al-manthūr*)

Author's comments: "That is disbelief" points to what has come in the verses under discussion in condemnation of *suht* and taking bribe in judgement: *and barter not My signs for a small price and whoever did not judge by what Allah revealed, those are they that are the unbelievers.* Many traditions from al-Bāqir and al-Ṣādiq have repeatedly said that: 'As for taking bribe in judgement, it is disbelief in God and His Messenger.' There are numerous traditions in exegesis of *suht* and its prohibition, narrated through Shīʾah and Sunnī chains and recorded in their collections of *ahādīth*.

(6) Ibn Abī Hātim, al-Nahhās (in his *al-Nāsikh wa al-mansūkh*), al-Tabarānī, al-Hākim (saying that it was correct), Ibn Marduwayh and al-Bayhaqī (in his *al-Sunan al-kubrā*) have narrated from Ibn ʿAbbās that he said, "Two verses of this chapter—that is, 'The Table'—were abrogated: the verse of *al-qalāid* (sacrificial animals with symbolic garlands) and: *therefore if they come to you, judge between them or turn aside from them.* Thus the Messenger of God had option, if he wished he would judge between them and if he wished he would turn aside from them and return them to their laws. Then was revealed (the verse): *And that you should judge between them by what Allah has revealed, and do not follow their low desires.*" (Ibn ʿAbbās) said, "So the Messenger of God was ordered to judge between then according to our Book." (*al-Durr al-manthūr*)

(7) Abū ʿUbayd, Ibn al-Mundhir and Ibn Marduwayh have narrated from Ibn ʿAbbās that he said about the verse: *judge between them or turn aside from them*, that it was abrogated by the verse: *And that you should judge between them by what Allah has revealed. (ibid.)*

Author's comments: al-Suyūtī has also narrated it through ʿAbdu al-Razzāq from ʿIkrimah. However, the theme of the verses does not agree

with this claim of abrogation. The clear context of the verses shows them to be interlinked and proves that they were revealed all together. As such there is no sense in saying that some of its verses have abrogated some others. Moreover, the verse: *And that you should judge between them by what Allah has revealed*, is not independent in its meaning; it is connected with the preceding verses; therefore there is no reason to treat it as an abrogating one. (However, if abrogation is OK with all these difficulties, then the clause: *therefore judge between them by what Allah has revealed*, in the preceding verse, has more right to be treated as abrogating.) Apart from that, you have seen that the pronoun, them, in, judge between them, more manifestly refers to the people in general, rather than the People of the Book or particularly the Jews. Moreover, we have described in the beginning of this chapter that the chapter of "The Table" is abrogating, and not abrogated.

(8) Abū ʿAmr al-Zubayrī narrates from Abū ʿAbdillāh that he said, "Surely the things because of which one deserves *Imamah* are: Purification, cleanliness from sins and grave offences which make one liable to the hell; then enlightened—and another copy says, (hidden) knowledge of all that the *ummah* needs, its *halāl* and *harām*, knowledge of its Book, its particular and general, decisive and ambiguous, intricacies of its knowledge and marvels of its interpretation, its abrogating and abrogated."

"I said, 'What is the proof that Imam cannot be except he who has the knowledge of these things you have mentioned?' He said, 'The word of God regarding those whom He has given permission to rule and made them deserving to it: *Surely We sent down the Torah in which was guidance and light; with it the prophets who submitted themselves (to Allah) were judging (matters) for those who were Jews, and (so did) the Divines and the scholars,* So these are the Imams, below the prophets, who raised up the people by their knowledge; and as for *al-ahbār*, they are the scholars, below the Divines; then God gave information and said: *as they were required to guard (part) of the Book of Allah*; and He did not say, they were put under the burden of the Book.'" (*al-Tafsīr*, al-ʿAyyāshī)

Author's comments: It is a very fine argument presented by the Imam; it shows a wonderful connotation of the verse, finer than the previously given explanation: It describes that the sequence used in the verse—the

prophets, then the Divines, then the scholars—points to their descending ranks in excellence and perfection; thus the Divines are below the prophets and above the scholars, and the scholars are those men of religious erudition who have been entrusted with its knowledge through teaching and learning.

God has described the mode of the Divines' knowledge in these words: *as they were required to guard (part) of the Book of Allah, and they were witnesses thereof.* If the idea were to show its similarity to the scholars' knowledge, it would have been said, as they were placed under it, as God says: *The similitude of those who were placed under the Torah, then they did not hold it* ... (62:5). It is because *al-istihfāz* means to ask someone to guard; it implies obligating him to guard and protect; it is similar to the words of God: *That He may question the truthful of their truth*, ... (33:8), that is, that He may obligate them to display the attribute of truthfulness that is hidden in their souls.

This guarding of the Book and its witnessing cannot be complete without *ʿismah* (sinlessness) which God does not grant to non-*maʾsūms*. *ʿIsmah*'s essentiality is understood from the fact that God has based His permission to them to judge on their guarding of the Book, and has given credence to their witnessing based on the same; and it is impossible to give credence to their witnessing if there were any possibility of their falling into error or committing any mistake—because it is on their testimony that the Book is confirmed.

So, this guarding and witnessing is something quite different from the protection and the testimony, which we are familiar with, in our society. Rather it is of the type of the protection of deeds and witnessing that has been mentioned in the verse: ... *that you may be the witnesses for the people and (that) the Messenger may be a witness for you* ... (2:143). Its explanation was given in the first volume of the Book.[1]

This guarding and witnessing is ascribed to all, although only some of them were going to do it, in the same way as witnessing of deeds has been ascribed to the whole *ummah*, although only a few shall do it. Such usage is common in the Qur'an; e.g. God says: *And certainly We gave the Book and the Wisdom and the Prophecy to the Children of Israel* ... (45:16). Of course, the scholars too were given the responsibility of guarding and witnessing and covenant was taken to that effect from them too. But it was

1 *al-Mīzān* (Eng.), vol. 2. (Trans.)

only a subjective religious affirmation, quite apart from real affirmation that depends on real guarding, free from mistake and error; and divine religion cannot be complete without this as it cannot be without that.

It is now established that there is a position between those of the prophets and the scholars, and it is the position of the Imams. God has told us about it in His word: *And We made of them Imams to guide by Our command as they were patient, and they were certain of our signs* (32:24). It does not go against the verses, which say: *And We gave him Isaac, and Jacob, as a further gift, and We made(them) all good ones. And We made them Imams, to guide (people) by Our command, ...* (21:72–73). It is because joining of prophethood and Imamate in a group does not prevent separation of the two positions in others. Some details about Imamate have been given in the first volume under the divine words: *And (remember) when his Lord tried Abraham with certain words, ...* (2:124).[1]

In short, the divines and Imams, who hold the middle rank between the prophets and the scholars, do have the knowledge of the Book as it should be known, and do bear witness thereof as it should be done.

The verse speaks about the divines and Imams of the Children of Israel. But the verse shows that it was because Torah was a Book revealed by God which contained guidance and light, that is, matters of belief and deed required of the *ummah*; and if that demanded this guarding and witnessing which can only be done by the divines and Imams, then the same will apply to every Book revealed by God which contained divine gnosis and practical laws. And this proves our intended purpose.

Therefore, the Imam's words, 'so these are the Imams below prophets', mean that the Imams' rank is below that of the prophets, according to the sequence given in the verse; likewise, the scholars are below the Imams. The words, they bring up the people with their knowledge, make it clear that the Imam has taken the word, *al-rabbānī* as being derived from *al-Tarbiyah* (to bring up) and not from *al-rububiyyah* (lordship). The meanings of other clauses are clear from earlier explanation.

Perhaps this meaning was intended by al-Bāqir when he said that the verse: *Surely We sent down the Torah in which was guidance and light ... required to guard (part) of the Book of Allah ...*, was revealed about the Imams of *Ahl al-Bayt*. Mālik al-Juhanī narrates that Abū Jaʾfar said about the above verse, "About us was it revealed." (*al-Tafsīr*, al-ʿAyyāshī)

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1 *al-Mīzān* (Eng.), vol. 2. (Trans.)

(9) *Tafsīr al-burhān* writes under the verse: *and whoever did not judge by what Allah revealed, those are they that are the unbelievers*, that [al-Kulaynī] narrates through his chain from ʿAbdullāh b. Muskān that he said, "The Messenger of God, said,

'Whoever judged about two dirhams a judgement of injustice, then enforced it by coercion, he shall be from among the people of this verse: *and whoever did not judge by what Allah revealed, those are they that are the unbelievers*.' I said, 'And how does he coerce in this matter?' He said, 'He will be having whip and prison; so he gives judgement against someone; then if he agreed to his judgement, (well and good); otherwise, he would beat him with his whip and put him in prison.'"

Author's comments: al-Shaykh has narrated it in *al-Tahdhīb* through his chain from Ibn Muskān, from the Prophet; and al-ʿAyyāshī has narrated it in his *al-Tafsīr* from him. The beginning of the *hadīth* is narrated through other chains too from the Imams of *Ahl al-Bayt*.

In this tradition, the judgement is made conditional on coercion. It implies that the judgement should be of such a nature as would produce an affect; it would be a decree, which by its very nature would show some definite result. Otherwise, mere utterance is not called judgement.

(10) Saʾīd b. Mansūr, Abu al-Shaykh and Ibn Marduwayh have narrated from Ibn ʿAbbās that he said: *and whoever did not judge by what Allah revealed, those are they that are the unbelievers, ... that are the unjust, ... that are the transgressors,* (were revealed) especially about the Jews. (*al-Durr al-manthūr*)

Author's comments: The three verses are unrestricted and there is no cause to justify their restriction; place of application does not permit change in word's generality. Apart from that, the third verse is related to the Christians, not the Jews. Moreover, a contrary traditionis narrated from the same Ibn ʿAbbās.

(11) ʿAbd b. Hamīd narrates from Hakīm b. Jubayr that he said, "I asked Saʾīd b. Jubayr about these verses of 'The Table'; I told (him) that a group thinks that they were revealed to the Children of Israel, and not to us. He said, 'Recite what is before it and what is after it,' so I recited them before him. So he said, 'No; but it was revealed to us.' Then I met Muqassim, *mawlā* of Ibn ʿAbbās; and I asked him about these verses in 'The Table'; I told (him) that a group thinks that they were revealed to the Children of Israel,

and not to us. He said, 'It was revealed to the Children of Israel and revealed to us, and whatever was revealed to them and to us, it is for them and for us.'

"Then I went to ʿAlī b. al-Husayn, and asked him about these verses in 'The Table'; and I told him that I had asked Saʾīd b. Jubayr and Muqassim about them. He (the Imam) said, 'Then what did Muqassim say?' So I informed him of it." (Hakīm) said, "The Imam said, 'He has said truth; but it is an unbelief, not like the unbelief of polytheism; and a transgression, not like the transgression of polytheism; and an injustice, not like the injustice of polytheism.' Then I met Saʾīd b. Jubayr and informed him of what he (the Imam) had said. Saʾīd b. Jubayr said to his son, 'How did you find him?' [He said], 'Indeed I found for him excellence over you and Muqassim." (*ibid.*)

Author's comments: The earlier given commentary shows that the tradition fits the apparent meaning of the verse.

(12) al-Kulaynī narrates in *al-Kafī* through his chain from al-Halabī from Abū ʿAbdillāh; and al-ʿAyyāshī narrates in his *al-Tafsīr* from Abū Basīr from the same Imam that he said about the verse: *but he who foregoes it, it shall be an expiation for him*; "Shall be expiated from his sins as much as he will forego of his wound or other things."

(13) Ibn Marduwayh has narrated from a man from the Helpers that the Prophet said regarding the words of God: *but he who foregoes it, it shall be an expiation for him*. "A man, his tooth is broken, or his hand is cut, or any organ of his body is cut or wounded, and he foregoes it, so (similar) quantity of his faults is reduced from him. If it was one-fourth of blood-money, then one-fourth of his faults, and if it was one-third, then one-third of his faults; and if it was (full) blood-money (all) his faults will fall down from him in similar way." (*al-Durr al-manthūr*)

Author's comments: A similar tradition has been narrated by ad-Daylamī from Ibn ʿUmar. Probably, what this and the preceding traditions say that the expiation is divided according to the division of foregoing, is inferred from the fact that in the shariah, blood-money, which is divisible, has the same position as retaliation; then retaliation and blood-money together are weighed *vis-à-vis* expiation of sins, and this too is divisible. Therefore part of it would stand opposite to part of that, as the

whole stands opposite to the whole.

(14) al-Qummī narrates in his *al-Tafsīr*, under the verse: *for every one of you did We appoint a law and a way*, that he said: "For every prophet was a shariah and a way."

(15) *Tafsīr al-burhān* writes under the verse: *Is it then the judgement of (the times of) ignorance that they desire?*, that [al-Kulaynī] narrates through his chain from Ahmad b. Muḥammad b. Khālid from his father from Abū ʿAbdillāh that he said, "Judges are four (types), three are in the Fire and one is in the Garden; a man judges unjustly and knowingly, so he is in the Fire; and a man judges unjustly and he does not know, so he is in the Fire; and a man judges justly but he does not know, so he is in the Fire; and a man judges justly and he knows, so he is in the Garden."

And he said, "Judgements are (of) two (categories): Judgement of God and judgement of (the Era of) Ignorance; so whoever misses the judgement of God, judges according to the (Era of) Ignorance."

Author's comments: There are many traditions of these two themes from the Shīʾah and Sunnī chains, recorded under the chapters of judgement and evidence. The verse hints at, rather clearly denotes both meanings. As for the first meaning, it is because judging unjustly whether he knew it to be unjust, or judged without knowledge and it chanced to be unjust—and likewise judging justly but without knowing it, all this is following the low desire, and God has forbidden it in His words: *therefore judge between them by what Allah has revealed, and do not follow their low desires (diverging) from the truth that has come to you*. In this verse, God warned against following low desires and has put it parallel to the judgement by the revealed truth. It is understood from it that permission of judgement is conditional on knowledge of truth; otherwise giving judgement is not allowed because it is merely following the low desires. Moreover, the name, judgement of the Era of Ignorance, is applicable to it, which stands face to face with the judgement of God.

As for the second theme, that is, the division of judgement between that of God and that of the Era of Ignorance, it is inferred from the apparent meaning of the words of God: *Is it then the judgement of (the times of) ignorance that they desire? And who is better than Allah to judge ...?* See how the two judgements stand opposite each other.

(16) al-Tabarī has narrated in his *al-Tafsīr* from Qatādah, under the

verse: *Surely We sent down the Torah in which was guidance and light; with it the prophets who submitted themselves (to Allah) were judging (matters) for those who were Jews, and (so did) the Divines and the scholars*, that he said, "As for the Divines, they were jurisprudents of the Jews; and as for the *ahbār*, they were their scholars." He (also) said, "And it has been reported to us that the Prophet of God said, when this verse was revealed, "We do judge the Jews and the others from people of (other) religions."

Author's comments: al-Suyūtī too has narrated it under the same verse through ʿAbd b. Hamīd and through Ibn Jarīr from Qatādah.

This tradition apparently shows that the reported utterance of the Prophet is related to this verse, that is, the verse is the proof of this statement. But the difficulty is that the said verse proves only that the judgement was based on the Torah and was reserved for the Jews because it contains the word: *for these who were Jews*; it did not extend to non-Jews, or to judging by other than Torah, contrary to what appears from the tradition. It could be said that the Prophet's word, "We do judge," means that the prophets do so; but it is a ridiculous meaning and has no relevance to the verse.

However, it appears that one of the narrators has erred in quoting the verse, and that the Prophet had spoken those words after revelation of the verse: *And We have revealed to you the Book with the truth, ... therefore judge between them by what Allah has revealed and do not follow their low desires* This hypothesis fits on what has earlier been mentioned that apparently the pronoun in, *judge between them*, refers to the people and not particularly to the Jews. However, the narrator has quoted one verse (5:44) in place of the other (5:48).

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Verses 51-54

It is difficult to say anything about these verses' connection with the preceding ones or the ones that follow, like: *Only Allah is your Guardian then surely the party of Allah are they that shall be triumphant*; and then its connection with that which follows: *O you who believe! Do not take for guardians ...*, and finally their connection with the verse: *O Messenger! Deliver what has been revealed to you ...*

But as for the four verses under discussion, they speak about the Jews and the Christians. The Qur'an had not talked about them in the Meccan verses, because there was no such need at that time. It however describes their maneuvers in the verses revealed at Medina. Even then, the ones revealed in the early Medinan period are not concerned with the Christians, because Muslims in those days were involved with the Jews. They had to mingle with them, live with them, keep good relations with them, or evert their deceit and neutralize their plot. They were entangled with the Christians in the later half of the Prophet's stay at Medina. Therefore, probably these four verses were revealed in that period; and perhaps the 'victory' alludes to the conquest of Mecca.

But it has been mentioned earlier that more reliably the chapter of "The Table" was revealed in the year of the Last pilgrimage, when Mecca was already conquered. So, does this victory refer to some conquest other than that of Mecca? Or, were these four verses revealed before Meccan conquest, and before the complete chapter was revealed? Again, is the last verse: *O you who believe! Whoever of you turns back from his religion, then soon Allah will bring a people ...*, connected with the three preceding ones? Which was the group whose apostasy was expected? Who were those people whom God promised to bring in place of the apostates? All these unanswered questions have compounded the confusion. The narratives giving the reason of revelation are varied and conflicting; actually they are merely personal opinions of the ancient exegetes, as is the case with most of such traditions. This excessive contradiction perplexes the mind and it fails to understand the verses' meaning. Add to it the intermingling of sectarian prejudice with personal interpretations, as you will see later in the traditions and exegetes' writings—both ancient and modern.

Meditation on these verses proves that the four are interlinked and independent having no relation with the preceding and the following verses; and the fourth one completes the intended theme. However one must be wary, in looking for its meaning, of laxities and carelessness indulged in by exegetes who have based their interpretations on personal views, especially regarding the attributes mentioned in the verses.

In a nutshell, God warns the believers against taking the Jews and the Christians for friends, and threatens them most severely; then points in an apocalyptic way where such friendship was to take them and how it would turn into ruins the magnificent structure of religious character; then God will bring on scene a people who will manage the affairs and restore the religion's structure to its original splendor.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَتَّخِذُوا الْيَهُودَ وَالنَّصَارَىٰ أَوْلِيَاءَ ۘ بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلِيَاءُ بَعْضٍ ۚ وَمَنْ يَتَوَلَّهُمْ مِنْكُمْ فَإِنَّهُ مِنْهُمْ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٥١﴾

(5:51) ***O you who believe! Do not take the Jews and the Christians for friends; they are friends of each other; and whoever amongst you takes them for a friend, then surely he is one of them; surely Allah does not guide the unjust people.***

Majmaʾ al-bayān says:

> "*al-Ittikhādh* means to rely on a thing in preparation for an affair; it is on the stem of *iftiʾāl* from the root, *al-akhdh* (to take); actually it was *al-iʾtikhādh*.[1] *al-Akhdh* (to take) is used in various ways: You say, 'He took the book (when he placed it in his hand)', 'He took the offering (when he accepted it)', 'God took him from his refuge (when He caused him to die);' it originally means passing of a thing from one direction to another."

al-Rāghib says:

> "*al-Wilāʾ* and *al-Tawāllī* means two or more things appear together in such a way that nothing extraneous comes between them. As an extended metaphor, it is used for proximity and nearness—in place, in relationship, in religion, in friendship, belief

1 In this edition we have omitted part of the explanation due to complications in rendering the exact translation. (Ed.)

and mutual helping."

More will be explained later.

In short, *al-wilāyah* is a sort of proximity, which removes barriers and partitions between two things, keeping in view the purpose of that proximity. If the proximity is with respect to piety and help, then *waliyy i*s the helper whom nothing can prevent from helping the person who is near him. If it is in respect of harmony and love (which is spiritual attraction) then *waliyy* is the beloved before whom man cannot keep his own will and gives him whatever he desires; and if it is in respect of relationship, the *waliyy* is the one who inherits him without any hindrance; and if it is with respect of obedience, then the *waliyy* is the one who controls his affairs in any way he pleases.

God, the Sublime, in His words: "do not take the Jews and the Christians for friends," has not put any condition or speciality on friendship; it is unrestricted [and as such should be prohibiting any kind of nearness]. But the words in the next verse: *But you will see those in whose hearts is a disease, hastening towards them, saying: "We fear lest a calamity should befall us,*" show that *wilāyah* in this verse is a sort of proximity and joining which is in affinity with the excuse offered by them, "We fear lest a calamity should befall us." As such it points to the turn of fortune, which alternates between the people. Such calamities could befall them through other than the Jews and Christians in which case these hypocrites hoped to get help from these two groups by taking them for *awliyā*ʾ, in the meaning of helpers; in the same way they were afraid of calamities befalling them from these two groups, and hoped to avert it by taking them for *awliyā*ʾ, in the meaning of nearness in love and friendship.

Wilāyah in the meaning of nearness in love and friendship gives both benefits of help and spiritual blending. Therefore, it is the meaning intended in the verse. We shall describe under the last verse, *O you who believe! Whoever of you turns back from his religion*, that *wilāyah* here means only friendship, nothing else.

An exegete has forcefully claimed that *wilāyah* in these verses means *wilāyah* of helping—two persons or two groups enter into alliance or covenant that when need arises each party would help the other. His argument runs as follows:

"The verses—as their apparent meaning shows—were revealed before the Last Pilgrimage, in the early days of *hijrah*, when the Prophet, and the Muslims were not finished with the affairs of the Jews in Medina and

around it in Fadak and Khaybar, etc. and beyond them were the Christians. Those Jews and Christians had entered into pacts and covenants of mutual help with various Arab tribes.

"This statement might fit on what has been narrated (in reasons of revelation) that ʿUbādah b. al-Sāmit (from Banū ʿAwf b. al-Khazraj) disavowed Banū Qaynuqāʾ when they fought the Messenger of God, and up to that time there was a *wilāyah* of covenant between him and them; but ʿAbdullāh b. Ubayy (the leader of the hypocrites) did not separate from them and hastened towards them, saying: *'We fear lest a calamity should befall us.'*

"Or, as has been narrated in the story of Abū Lubābah that when the Messenger of God, sent him to Banū Qurayzah, so that he should make them come out of their fortress and accept the Prophet's judgement, he pointed with his hand to his throat, hinting to them that it meant slaughter.

"Or, as is narrated that some of them used to write the news of Medina to the Christians of Syria, and some were reporting to the Jews of Medina in order to benefit from their wealth, even if it be a loan.

"Or, as is reported that after the killings and defeat in the battle of Uhud, some of them said that he would attach himself to so-and-so Jew or Christian.

"All these narratives almost unanimously claim that it were the hypocrites who had said: *'We fear lest a calamity should befall us.'*

"In short, the verses forbid entering into covenant and *wilāyah* of mutual help between the Muslims and the Jews and the Christians. "Some people have emphasized it, claiming that linguistically the words and context of the verse totally oppose taking *wilāyah* in it in the meaning of *wilāyah* of love and reliance; it is also opposed by the reason of revelation and the overall condition under which the Muslims and the People of the Book lived in the era of revelation.

"How can the verse be taken to prohibit living and mingling with them even if they were *dhimmīs* or had pact with Muslims? We know that the Jews lived with the Prophet and the Muslims in Medina, and the Muslims dealt with them with total equality."

Comment: All this shows a laxity and carelessness in finding out the verse's connotation: What has he said that the verses were revealed before the year of the Last Pilgrimage—and it was the year when the chapter of "The Table" was revealed—presents not much difficulty; but it does not prove that the *wilāyah* denotes entering into covenant and not *wilāyah*

of love.

As for the narrated reasons of revelation that show that the verses were revealed particularly about the covenant and the *wilāyah* of mutual help between some Arab tribes and the Jews and the Christians, the following comments apply to them:

First: The said reasons of revelation are mutually contradictory and do not present a single connotation which could be relied upon;

Second: It does not cover the *wilāyah* of the Christians, even if it covers somehow that of the Jews, because the Arabs did not have any *wilāyah* of covenant with the Christians.

Third: We agree to the reasons of revelation in what they say; yet you have been told several times that most of those traditions, apart from being weak, are merely attempts to apply historic events on the Qur'anic verses which appear to have some relevance to them—although we find no difficulty in it.

However, the idea, that such narrated events particularize or restrict the generality of a Qur'anic verse, is not tenable, nor does its apparent meaning support it. If the apparent meanings of the verses were particularized or restricted because of some speciality of reasons of revelation, without taking it from the wordings of the verse, the Qur'an would have died with the death of those about whom such verses were revealed, and it could not be used in any argumentation related to any later event or incident; such an idea is not approved by the Book or the *Sunnah* nor by reason.

He has also claimed, "Linguistically the words, and context of the verse totally oppose taking *wilāyah* here in the meaning of *wilāyah* of love and reliance. It is also opposed by the reason of revelation and the overall condition under which the Muslims and the People of the Book lived in the era of revelation." Ponder on it as much as you like but you cannot deduce any worthwhile meaning from it. When apparent meaning of a verse does not go against application of a theme to it, reason of its revelation and overall prevailing condition of the time become irrelevant. You have known that there is no justification in restricting the verse to its reason of revelation and to the overall condition of the era. Rather, the argument goes totally against it, because a verse in its unrestricted appearance is in itself an authentic proof. You have seen that this verse too is unrestricted (and nothing points to its being restricted); therefore, it is an authentic authority in its unrestricted meaning, that is, the *wilāyah*

in the meaning of love.

The claim that meanings of single words used in the verse and its context disavow totally taking *wilāyah* in the meaning of love is really astonishing. Would that I knew what he has meant with this total disavowal, and more than that he has used the 'context' too in this argument!

How can the wording or context of the verse reject this meaning, when the clause: "do not take the Jews and the Christians for friends," is followed by the clause: "they are friends of each other," and doubtlessly *wilāyah* in this latter clause denotes love, unity and affection, and not *wilāyah* of covenant and pact. There is no sense in saying: 'Do not make a covenant with the Jews and the Christians; they have covenant with each other.' Whatever unity and relation there was among the Jews, it was the *wilāyah* of national love. The same was the case with the Christians; there was no pact or covenant made by them, it was only the love and unity based on religion.

Likewise, the words of God, coming after this clause, prove this meaning: *and whoever amongst you takes them for a friend, then surely he is one of them*. The reason that turns a friend of a group into a member of it, is this: Love unites scattered things, unites different souls; because of love perceptions of the lovers become one, their characters mirror one another; their actions reflect each other's. The two lovers, when love overwhelms them, become as if they are one person, having a single psyche, a single will, doing a single action; one does not go against the other in the passage of life and in social norms.

This is what makes a lover of a group a member of that group and unites him with it. It has been said: Whoever loves a people, he is one of them; also [it is said]: A man is with whom he loves. And God has said forbidding loving the polytheists: *O you who believe! Do not take My enemy and your enemy for friends: would you offer them love while they deny what has come to you of the truth, ...* (60:1). The verses go on in the same vein, until it says: *... and whoever makes friends with them, these are the unjust* (60:9). Also He says: *You shall not find a people who believe in Allah and the latter day befriending those who act in opposition to Allah and His Messenger, even though they were their fathers, or their sons, or their brothers, or their kinsfolk; ...* (58:22). God has also said regarding the love of the unbelievers—and the wording is general which includes the Jews, the Christians and the polytheists—*Let not the believers take the unbelievers for friends rather than the believers; and whoever does this, he*

shall have nothing (to do) with Allah, except (when) you guard yourselves against (them) for fear from them; and Allah cautions you of Himself; ... (3:28). The verse clearly speaks about the *wilāyah* of love and affection rather than that of covenant and pact. Remember that when the third chapter, "The House of ʿImrān," was revealed; the Prophet had already concluded pacts and truce with the Jews and the polytheists.

In short, the *wilāyah* that makes one people attached to another people is that of love and affection, and not that of covenant and help; and it is quite clear. If the clause: *and whoever amongst you takes them as awliyāʾ, then surely he is one of them*, is taken to mean, whoever among you entered into a pact of mutual help after this prohibition, then surely he because of his going against this prohibition would be unjust, and would be joined to those unjust people in injustice, then it would be a vulgar meaning and would need additional conditions to be attached to the speech.

If the Qur'an prohibits something which was hitherto lawful, it always points to its being lawful until then; it does so to preserve the honor of that order which is now being changed; and to keep the sanctity of the Prophetic tradition and practice. Ponder on these verses: *O you who believe! The idolaters are nothing but unclean, so they shall not approach the Sacred Mosque after this year; ...* (9:28). *... Wherefore now be in contact with them and seek what Allah has written for you, and eat and drink until the white thread becomes distinct unto you from the black thread (of night)* (2:187). *It is not allowed to you to take women afterwards, nor that you should change them for other wives*, (33:52); and many other such verses.

Now, it is clear that the language of the verse, in meanings of words and in context, does not disallow *wilāyah* to be taken for love and affection; if there is any rejection, it rejects other meanings.

As for their claim that clause: *in whose hearts is a disease*, refers to the hypocrites, you will soon see that the context does not support it.

Thus, the clause: "do not take the Jews and the Christians for *awliyāʾ* " clearly forbids loving them or having any affection towards them; because such feelings pull the souls and spirits towards each other and it creates mutual moral effects on both sides; and if Muslims are influenced by un-Islamic behavior, their society will diverge from its religious way (which is based on the felicity of following the truth) to the way of unbelief (which is based on following the low desires and worshipping the Satan); and thus it will go astray from the path of the natural life.

God has used for them their names of Jews and Christians, instead of

saying, the People of the Book; because the phrase: "People of the Book," indicates that they are somewhat nearer to the Muslims, which in its turn gives rise to some affection and love which is opposite to what this verse orders that they should not be taken as friends. However, a coming verse mentions them as being given the Book: *O you who believe! Do not take for guardians those who take your religion for a mockery and a joke, from among those who were given the Book before you and the unbelievers; ...* (5:57). They were given the Book and yet they take the divine religion for a mockery and a joke. This mockery and joke turns the good point of their being given the Book into utmost condemnation. When the people who were given the Book which invited to the truth and made it clear, began ridiculing the religion of truth and playing with it, they certainly deserved to be shunned and avoided; they should not be taken as friends; the believers must avoid living with them, mingling with them and having any soft feeling towards them.

... they are friends of each other: As explained earlier, *wilāyah* here means friendship, because their hearts are nearer to each other and their souls have mutual attraction. Consequently, they think in similar way; they join hands in following their low desires, and their haughtiness leads them to reject the truth; they strive together to extinguish the light of God, and help each other in fighting against the Prophet and the Muslims. It seems, as all of them are one person of one religion. Although actually they are not of one religion, yet they have joined their forces and have become one power against the Muslims, simply because Islam calls them to truth and opposes what in their eyes is the greatest goal: To follow their low desires and licentiousness in objects of desire and enjoyment of worldly attractions.

It is this factor that has made the Jews and the Christians—in spite of their mutual discord and enmity—into one society; they come near each other and return to one another; the Jews love the Christians and the Christians love the Jews; Jewish groups love each other, and the Christian nations are attracted to one another. That is why the clause: "they are friends of each other," has been left vague [so that it may cover all situations]. This clause explains the reason of the foregoing one: "do not take the Jews and the Christians for friends." It means as follows: 'Do not take them for friends because, in spite of their internal discord and mutual enmity, they are fully united against you; you will not get any benefit from going near them with love and affection.'

It is possible to infer another meaning from this clause: "they are friends of each other." Do not take them for friends; because with this friendship, you expect the group, which you have befriended to help you against another group, which is not your friends; but your expectation can never materialize, because they are friends of each other, so naturally they will not help you against their own people.

***... and whoever amongst you takes them for a friend, then surely he is one of them; surely Allah does not guide the unjust people*:** *al-Tawallī* (to take as friend); *min* (from, part).

The meaning is as follows: Whoever from amongst you takes them for friend; he is a part of them. This is an attachment brought into effect by revelation and it makes some believers members of Jewish and Christian groups. It shows that faith is a reality which has different stages, some blemished, some pure; some adulterated, some clean. This is inferred from Qur'anic verses like: *And most of them do not believe in Allah without associating others (with Him)* (12:106). This blemish and turbidity is what God describes as the disease of hearts: *So you will see those in whose hearts is a disease, hastening in them, ...*

Thus, those who love the Jews and the Christians, God has counted them as belonging to the Jewish and Christian communities, although apparently they were believers. It shows at least that they were proceeding, not on the path of guidance (that is, belief), but on a way used by the said communities, it leads them where they are being led and takes them where they are taken.

That is why God has explained the reason of their adherence to them by the clause: "surely God does not guide the unjust people." The meaning: A man from amongst you who takes them as a friend, then surely he is one of them, and he is proceeding on a path other than yours, because the path of belief is the path of divine guidance; this man who befriends them is unjust like them, and God does not guide the unjust people.

As you see, the verse just shows that the position of the believers who befriend the Jews and the Christians is the same as theirs; but it does not go ahead, that is, does not describe the effects branching from it. The wording is unrestricted; yet because it describes a fundamental reality (like the clauses: *... and that you fast is better for you ...* [2:184]; *... surely prayer keeps* [one] *away from indecency and evil ...* [29:45], etc.). It is inevitably vague, and if one wants to prove from it a subsidiary law, one should refer to the *sunnah*; and it is *fiqh* that looks into such orders.

فَتَرَى الَّذِينَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ مَرَضٌ يُسَارِعُونَ فِيهِمْ يَقُولُونَ نَخْشَىٰ أَنْ تُصِيبَنَا دَائِرَةٌ ۚ فَعَسَى اللَّهُ أَنْ يَأْتِيَ بِالْفَتْحِ أَوْ أَمْرٍ مِنْ عِنْدِهِ فَيُصْبِحُوا عَلَىٰ مَا أَسَرُّوا فِي أَنْفُسِهِمْ نَادِمِينَ ﴿٥٢﴾

(5:52) ***So you will see those in whose hearts is a disease, hastening in them, saying: "We fear lest a calamity should befall us;" but it may be that Allah will bring the victory or a thing from Himself, so that they shall be regretting on account of what they hid in their souls.***

It sprouts from the preceding statement: *surely Allah does not guide the unjust people*. As the divine guidance does not cover them, so they are in error, they do hasten in them and offer an excuse that does not deserve attention. God has said, "hastening in them," instead of 'towards them'; so they are a part of them, occupying their place in error. They hasten in them not because they are afraid of befalling a calamity over them; actually they had no such fear; it was an excuse they had contrived for averting the admonition and blame they expected from the Prophet and the Muslims. In fact, this hastening emanated from their friendship with, and love of those Jews and Christians.

Every injustice and falsity is bound to vanish and disappear any day; its ignominy becomes exposed before public eyes; and anyone who seeks to attain unlawful objects through wrongful means disguised as truthful, has to be bitterly disappointed; as God has said: *surely Allah does not guide the unjust people.* Consequently, it was definitely expected that God would bring a victory or a thing from Himself, then they would be regretting on account of what they were doing, and the believers would clearly see through their falsehood and pretence.

The above talk makes it clear how the clause: "So you will see those in whose hearts is a disease," branches from the preceding: *surely Allah does not guide the unjust people.* We have somewhere earlier have written the meaning of the unjust people not getting any guidance in their injustice.

The group mentioned in these verses was hypocrites, because they showed to the Prophet and the believers what was not in their hearts. They claimed that they hastened in the Jews and the Christians, lest a calamity should befall them, while the real cause (which conformed to what was in their hearts) was their love of, and inclination towards God's enemies.

This was the aspect of their hypocrisy. But they were not hypocrites, in the meaning of unbelievers pretending to be believers, because the context does not agree with it.

Some exegetes have written that the verses refer to the hypocrites, in the latter meaning, like ʿAbdullāh b. Ubayy and his companions, as appears from the traditions giving reason of revelations. Those hypocrites participated with the believers in their gatherings and dealt with them in an amicable way; on the other hand they had made with the Jews and the Christians covenants and pacts of mutual help. This double-dealing was done in the hope of getting benefits from both sides, and as a matter of precaution to safeguard their personal interests. In this way, they hoped to triumph either way; they would be safe from calamity on whichever side it befell.

But this interpretation of theirs is not in agreement with the context, because it contains a hope that they shall be regretting because of the victory or a thing from God. The victory may refer to the conquest of Mecca or taking the fortresses of the Jews and the Christians' towns, or so on. But in all these situations there was no reason why they should be regretting, as they had taken the precaution to protect their both flanks, and there is no regret in precaution. Their regret could be in place if they had totally separated from the believers and joined the Jews and the Christians, and then calamity had befallen on their group. Likewise, the forfeiture of their deeds and the loss mentioned in the next verse, (*their deeds shall go for nothing, so they shall became losers*), have no relevance with their hypocrisy, as the hypocrites practised precaution to safeguard their interests; and if someone does so for fear of some untoward happening, and perchance that happening does not take place, he suffers no loss and won't be called a loser. In fact, precaution is a wise method in practice and does not entail any blame or condemnation.

It could be claimed that they became liable to condemnation because they went against divine prohibition and had no faith in the divine promise of victory. There is nothing wrong in this idea in itself, but the verse's wording does not support it.

***... but it may be that Allah will bring the victory or a thing from Himself, so that they shall be regretting on account of what they hid in their souls*:** *ʿAsā* (may be), in divine speech, like other talks, denotes a hope, an expectation—as we have already explained that the said expectation relates to the listener, or to the situation. But this verse contains

a definite association that shows that the expected event must certainly take place. The clause aims at confirming the truth of the preceding one: *surely Allah does not guide the unjust people*; as such what it says must happen without fail.

The victory which God has mentioned—and has presented it as an alternative to a thing which is unknown to us—probably supports the view that "the" in "the victory" denotes generic noun, not a particular victory. As such it does not point to the victory of Mecca, which the Prophet was promised in verses like: *Most surely He Who has made the Qur'an binding on you will bring you back to the destination ...* (28:85); *... you shall most certainly enter the Sacred Mosque, if Allah pleases ...* (48:27), and others.

Although the word, "victory" when used in the Qur'an, refers in most of the places to the conquest of Mecca, yet in some places it is not possible to apply it on that usual theme. For example: *And they say: "When will this victory take place, if you are truthful?" Say: "On the day of victory the faith of those who (now) disbelieve will not profit them, nor will they be respited." Therefore, turn away from them and wait, surely they too are waiting* (32:28-30). God declares here that when this victory gained the faith of those who had hitherto disbelieved will not profit them and that the unbelievers were waiting for it. Obviously, these two attributes do not apply to the Meccan conquest, nor to any other victory which Muslims have achieved up to this time. [For this reason the word, *al-fath* is rendered in many Qur'anic translations as "judgement."]

We can think of only two situations where the faith, repentance, will not be of any profit, as we have described when writing about Repentance.[1] One: With change of this world with the next world when there will remain no free will and power. Two: If a man acquires such characteristics and traits that his heart becomes stone hard, and every hope of repentance and returning to God is lost. God says: *... On the day when some of the signs of your Lord shall come, its faith shall not profit a soul, which did not believe before, or earn good through its faith ...* (6:158). *And repentance is not for those who go on doing evil deeds, until when death comes to one of them, he says: "Surely, now I repent;" nor (for) those who die while they are unbelievers* (4:18)

In any case, if the victory refers to the conquest of Mecca or victory over the Jewish fortresses or Christian towns, so be it; but there is a

1 See *al-Mīzān* (Eng.), vol. 8, under the verse 17-18 of the ch.4. (Trans.)

vagueness in application of the clauses: "they shall be regretting ..." and the verse: *And those who believe will say ...*, on this meaning.

And if the victory denotes victory of Islam over disbelief and clear judgement between the Messenger of God and his people, then it is a Qur'anic apocalyptic text which points to the happenings which this *ummah* is to face in future; and it fits what has been stated in the chapter of "Jonah": *And every nation had a messenger; so when their messenger came, the matter was decided between them with justice and they shall not be dealt with unjustly. And they say: "When will this threat come about, if you are truthful?" ... every nation has a term; when their term comes, they shall not remain behind for an hour, nor can they go before (their time). Say: "Tell me if ... What! Now (you believe)! And already you wished to have it hastened on." ... And they ask you: "Is that true?" Say: Aye! By my Lord! It is most surely the truth, and you will not escape." ... and they will manifest regret when they see the chastisement.* (10:47–56).

***... so that they shall be regretting on account of what they hid in their souls*:** One happens to regret when one does what should not have been done or neglects what should not have been neglected; and those people had done some undesirable thing; and God describes in the next verse, that their deeds were forfeited and they had incurred loss. It was because they had hid in their hearts love of the Jews and the Christians, in order to accomplish through it and by hastening in them what those enemies of Islam had wanted, that is, to extinguish the light of God and acquire the worldly objects of desire—without there being any hindrance from religion. Probably, this was what they hid in their hearts and for this purpose hastened in them; and they soon shall be regretting when their endeavours shall come to naught when God will grant victory to the truth.

وَيَقُولُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَهَٰؤُلَاءِ الَّذِينَ أَقْسَمُوا بِاللَّهِ جَهْدَ أَيْمَانِهِمْ ۙ إِنَّهُمْ
لَمَعَكُمْ ۚ حَبِطَتْ أَعْمَالُهُمْ فَأَصْبَحُوا خَاسِرِينَ ﴿٥٣﴾

(5:53) ***And those who believe will say: "Are these they who swore by Allah with the most forcible of their oaths that they were most surely with you? Their deeds shall go for nothing, so they shall become losers."***

Yaqūlu (will say) has also been recited *yaqūla* in which case it will be in conjunction with: *so that they shall be regretting*; and then the meaning

will be, they shall be regretting while the believers will be saying ... This recital is preferable because it is more in conformity with the context. Their regretting on account of what they hid in their souls, and the believers' statement all are a rebuke to them because of their love of, and hastening in the Jews and the Christians. The demonstrative pronoun, in "Are these they" points to the Jews and the Christians; while the second person plural pronoun in "with you" addresses those in whose hearts there is a disease; also it may be *vice versa*; likewise, the pronouns in the clauses: "Their deeds shall go for nothing, so they shall become losers," may point to the Jews and the Christians or to those in whose hearts there is a disease.

However, the context shows that "with you" refers to those in whose hearts there is a disease, and the demonstrative pronoun points to the Jews and the Christians; while the clauses: "Their deeds shall go for nothing ...," are a reply to an unasked question. The meaning: It may be that God will bring the victory or a thing from Himself, then those who believe will say to those of weak faith when the wrath of God will overtake them, 'Are these Jews and Christians they who swore by God so forcefully, with the most forcible of their oaths that they were most surely with you? So why they are not doing something to benefit you?' Then arose in minds the unspoken question: 'So what was the ultimate result of those who loved these Jews and Christians?' And the reply came: 'Their deeds were forfeited and they became losers.'

Meaning of 'Disease of the Heart'

The phrase: *in whose hearts is a disease*, clearly says that hearts become diseased; conversely it shows that they also may be healthy, because health and disease are opposite each other; if one is found in a subject, inevitably that subject is capable of accepting its opposite, like blindness and eye-sight. Don't you see that a wall is not called sick because it does not accept the attribute of healthiness?

In all places where God ascribes disease to hearts, He describes such conditions and attributes of hearts, which prove that they have gone out of straight nature and deviated from right path. For example: *And when the hypocrites and those in whose hearts was a disease began to say: "Allah and His Messenger did not promise us (victory) but only to deceive"* (33:12). *When the hypocrites and those in whose hearts was disease said: "Their religion has deceived these (Muslims)" ...* (8:49). *So that He may make what the Satan casts a trial for those in whose hearts is disease and those whose*

hearts are hard; (22:53), apart from other verses.

In short, heart's disease means its involvement with a sort of suspicion and doubt that pollutes the faith in God and removes confidence in His signs; it blends faith with polytheism. That is why such a heart experiences such conditions, and such a man commits such deeds as have affinity with disbelief in God and rejection of his communications.

Conversely, heart's health and freedom from disease means its being steadfast in straight nature and its adherence to the right path; it leads man to sincerity in monotheistic belief and reliance on God, discarding all things to which his low desires are attracted. God says: *The day on which neither property will avail, nor sons, except him who comes to Allah with a heart free (from evil)*, (26:88–89).

It is evident from above that those in whose hearts is a disease, are other than the hypocrites, as the Qur'anic expression in so many places shows: *the hypocrites and those in whose hearts is a disease*. It is because the hypocrites are those who believed with their tongues and their hearts did not believe, while total disbelief is the death of the heart, not a disease. God says: *Is he who was dead then we raised him to life and made for him a light by which he walks among the people,* (6:122). *Only those accept who listen; and (as to) the dead Allah will raise them, ...* (6:36).

Obviously, the heart's disease, in Qur'anic expression, means the doubt and suspicion that overwhelms man's perception regarding God and His signs, which makes the heart unable to adhere to a religious belief.

Thus, those in whose hearts is a disease are the people of weak faith who listen to every loud-mouthed person; and like a weather-cock turn with winds; this phrase does not refer to the hypocrites who pretended to believe and kept their disbelief hidden, caring for their worldly interests, is order that they might get benefits from the believers—through their manifested belief—and from the disbelievers through their hidden disbelief.

Of course, sometimes the Qur'an calls them hypocrites analytically, because both groups in their inner selves are devoid of faith. It is separate from using the phrase: *those in whose hearts is a disease*, for those whom are unbelievers pretending to believe. God says: *Announce to the hypocrites that they shall have a painful chastisement, those who take the unbelievers for guardians rather than believers. Do they seek honor from them? Then surely all honor is for Allah. And indeed He has revealed to you in the Book that when you hear Allah's communications disbelieved in and mocked at, do not sit with them until they enter into some other discourse; surely then*

you would be like them; surely Allah will gather together the hypocrites and the unbelievers all in Hell. (4:138–40)

As for the words of God in the chapter of "The Cow": *And there are some people who say: "We believe in Allah and in the last day"; while they are not at all believers ... There is a disease in their hearts, so Allah added to their disease. And when it is said to them: "Believe as the people have believed," they say: "Shall we believe as the fools have believed?" ...* (2:8–13); it goes on describing their double faced up to verse 20; and it gives a picture of their hearts' journey from doubt in truth to its denial; and declares that in the beginning they were diseased because they wrongfully claimed to be believers while they were in doubt and had not believed yet; so God added to their disease, until they perished because they disbelieved in truth and mocked it.

God has explained that the heart's disease, like that of the body, sometimes goes on increasing until it becomes deep-rooted and chronic and ends in perdition; it happens when harmful things are taken or done—which in this case is disobedience of God. God says: *There is a disease in their hearts, so Allah added to their disease ...* (2:10). *And whenever a chapter is revealed, ... And as for those in whose hearts is a disease, it adds uncleanness to their uncleanness and they die while they are unbelievers. Do they not see that they are tried once or twice in every year, yet they do not turn (to Allah) nor do they mind?* (9:124–6). Then God comments in a general way: *Then evil was the end of those who did evil, because they rejected the signs of Allah and used to mock them* (30:10).

God then says that the cure of this disease is to believe in Him; as He says in a general way ... *their Lord will guide them by their faith; ...* (10:9). Also He says: *To Him do ascend the good words; and the good deed, lifts them up; ...* (35:10). Therefore, if a heart-patient wants to cure his disease, he must repent and return to God; in other words, he must believe in Him and must practise good thought and good deed, as the above-mentioned verse alludes to it: ... *yet they do not turn (to Allah) nor do they mind* (9:126).

God has revealed a comprehensive statement on this subject in the chapter of "Women": *O you who believe! Do not take the unbelievers for friends rather than the believers; do you desire that you should give to Allah a manifest proof against yourselves? Surely the hypocrites are in the lowest stage of the Fire, and you shall not find a helper for them; except those who repent and amend and hold fast to Allah and are sincere in their religion to Allah; these are with the believers, and Allah will grant the believers a*

mighty reward (4:144–6). It has been explained that it means returning to God with belief, remaining steadfast on it and adhering to the Book and the *Sunnah*, and being sincere in all this.

Commentary continues:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مَنْ يَرْتَدَّ مِنْكُمْ عَنْ دِينِهِ فَسَوْفَ يَأْتِي اللَّهُ بِقَوْمٍ يُحِبُّهُمْ وَيُحِبُّونَهُ أَذِلَّةٍ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ أَعِزَّةٍ عَلَى الْكَافِرِينَ يُجَاهِدُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَلَا يَخَافُونَ لَوْمَةَ لَائِمٍ ۚ ذَٰلِكَ فَضْلُ اللَّهِ يُؤْتِيهِ مَنْ يَشَاءُ ۚ وَاللَّهُ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٥٤﴾

(5:54) ***O you who believe! Whoever of you turns back from his religion, then soon Allah will bring a people that He shall love them and they shall love Him, lowly before the believers, mighty against the unbelievers, they shall strive hard in Allah's way and shall not fear the censure of any censurer; this is Allah's grace, He gives it to whom He pleases, and Allah is Ample-giving, knowing.***

al-Irtidād literally means to turn back. In Muslims' terminology, turning back from religion means apostasy, forsaking belief for disbelief, no matter whether that belief was preceded by disbelief or not. If an unbeliever accepts Islam and then apostatizes, he is called *murtadd millī*; if a born Muslim turns back from Islam, he is called *murtadd fitrī*. This terminology is either laid down by the shariah or by the Muslims themselves.

It may appear at the first glance that the turning back in this verse denotes the terminological meaning in which the Muslims use this word. As such the verse will have no connection with the preceding verses. It would be an independent verse showing that God might dispense with belief of one people replacing it with that of the others. But this likelihood is removed, when one meditates on this and the preceding verses. The verse in fact makes the believers remember that God has power that He should be worshipped in His earth, and He will soon bring there a people who would not turn back from His religion; they would adhere to it to the end. He says: *... therefore if these disbelieve in it, We have (already) entrusted with it a people who are not disbelievers in it* (6:89). *... and whoever disbelieves, then surely Allah is Self-sufficient (independent) of the worlds* (3:97). *... If you disbelieved, you and those on earth all together, most surely Allah is Self-sufficient, Praised* (14:8).

Such a sublime position does not demand more than paying attention to the basic theme, that is, appraising them that God would bring a community of believers who would not turn back from His religion. The other attributes that they shall love God and He shall love them, and that they will be lowly before the believers and mighty against the unbelievers, etc. are additional characteristics that have been described here keeping in view additional requirements of context and condition.

Looking at it from another angle, we realize that the said attributes are not without some connection with the theme of the preceding verses regarding befriending the Jews and the Christians rather than the believers. Taking them as friends rather than the believers, shows a certain inclination of heart towards them, a connection of love and affinity; and how could such a polluted heart contain the love of God as God says: *Allah has not made for any man two hearts within him*; ... (33:4).

This friendship would lead the believer to become lowly before the disbelievers and mighty against the believers and show haughtiness before them, as God says: ... *Do they seek honor from them? Then surely all honor is for Allah* (4:139).

Another concomitant of this friendship is that they would show laxity in fighting against those disbelievers and would shrink from jihād; they would not have any patience if they were deprived of any comfort in the way of God, nor would they be ready to cut off all social contacts with them. But God says: *O you who believe! Do not take My enemy and your enemy for friends: would you offer them love while they deny what has come to you of the truth, ... If you go forth fighting in My path and seeking My pleasure, would you manifest love to them? ...* (60:1). Further God says: *Indeed, there is for you a good example in Abraham and those with him when they said to their people: "Surely we dissociate from you and from what you worship other than Allah; we renounce you, and enmity and hatred have appeared between us and you for ever until you believe in Allah alone"*; ... (60:4).

Likewise, *irtidād*, in its literal meaning, or by analytical process, is applicable to befriending the disbelievers, as God has said in the preceding verse: *and whoever amongst you takes them for a friend, then surely he is one of them.* Also He has said [in this context]: ... *and whoever does this, he shall have nothing (to do) with Allah, ...* (3:28); ... *surely then you would be like them; ...* (4:140).

The above discussion shows that the verse has some connection with

the preceding ones; and it makes it clear that God's religion does not need such people who are prone to fall into the pit of disobedience and befriend the Jews and the Christians, because hypocrisy has crept into their community, and now it contains a lot of people with diseased hearts. They sell religion for worldly benefits, and covet the fallacious honor and transient influence rather than the honor and power, which are reserved for God, His Messenger, and the believers. They do not care for the real felicity, which covers life of this world as well as that of the next.

The verse expounds it by giving information about a future upheaval: If religion suffers from unsteady capricious behavior of these people of weak faith who prefer love of other than God over that of God, seek honor near enemies of God, show laxity in fighting in His way and fear blames and admonition of His enemies, then certainly soon God will bring a people who shall love Him and He shall love them; who shall be lowly before the believers, mighty before the unbelievers, and who shall fight in the way of God and shall not fear the censure of any censurer.

Although many exegetes were aware that the verse contains information of a future cataclysm, and spent much time on deciding whom the verse should be applied to; yet they did not take trouble to properly explain its wordings. As a result, they failed to correctly interpret the attributes mentioned in it. Consequently, they treated the divine speech just like a human talk which includes many a loop-holes and inaccuracies.

No doubt, the Qur'an uses the same words, which the Arabs did, and construction of its sentences is not different from the usual Arab style—in short, its oratorical system is the same as the Arabs of the time of revelation were familiar with. Yet it totally differs from other speeches in one aspect: When we speak, no matter whether we are eloquent or not, we base our talk on the meanings we understand, and our understanding is drawn from the social life which we have created through our human social nature. This nature usually passes a judgement in accordance with analogy. This opens before us the door of inexactitude and inaccuracy. We start saying 'all' in place of 'most', and 'everlasting' instead of 'long lasting'. We take an analogical statement as unconditional truth; we confuse 'rare' with 'non-existent', and 'a little' with 'extinct'. We unreservedly say: This is good, that is bad; this is liked, that is disliked; this is praiseworthy, that is condemnable; this is beneficial, that is harmful; this man is noble, that one is evil, and so on. We give unconditional judgement. But in reality it is correct only in some conditions, with some assumptions, in view of

a few people, in comparison to some things only—but not unreservedly. However, we treat a few contrary situations as non-existent, thus showing a laxity in its perception and the judgement. This concerns those items, which actually exist independently. As for those things of which man is oblivious because of his limited perception of related matters, they are even more numerous. Therefore, whatever man speaks about and about which he assumes some knowledge and perception, is all based on inexactitude in some aspects, and ignorance of others. If we could comprehend the reality and then tried to apply that speech on it, we would find that it was merely a joke. Ponder on it.

This is the condition of human speech, which is based on the knowledge acquired by man. As for the divine speech, it must be above such shortcomings, because God encompasses all things in His knowledge; and He says about His speech: *Most surely it is a decisive word, and it is not a jest* (86:13–14).

And it guides us how we should explain the divine words without attaching to it any condition when the said words are unrestricted and are not followed by any joint or separate condition; and this is how we should look at the attributes mentioned therein as they point to the underlying reason of the statement. When God says: *He shall love them*, then He shall not dislike them in anything and in any manner—otherwise He would have attached an exception. And when He praises them as being lowly before the believers, it implies that they would be lowly before them because of their belief in God, and they would remain lowly in all conditions and in all situations; otherwise it would not be a decisive word.

Of course, there are some attributes ascribed to a large group while in reality it applies to a select band from among them—when both groups are united in a way that justifies such usage. God says: *And certainly We gave the Book and the Wisdom and the Prophecy to the Children of Israel, and We gave them of the goodly things, and We made them excel the nations* (45:16). *... He has chosen you and has not laid upon you any hardship in religion; ...* (22:78); *You are the best of the nations raised up for the (benefit of) men; you enjoin what is right and forbid the wrong ...* (3:110); *... that you may be witnesses for the people and the Messenger may be a witness for you ...* (2:143); *And the Messenger cried out: "O my Lord! Surely my people have treated this Qur'an as a forsaken thing.* (25:30), apart from other verses which describe sociological attributes which are found in individuals and society. Such expressions are not based on any laxity;

they are attributes ascribed to a part and the whole, to the society as well as to an individual, because of some relevance. For example, we have a handful of earth containing a gem; now we may say, there is earth in our hand; and equally truthfully it may be said that there is a gem in our hand, and the real purpose is to take that gem.

Now, let us return to our original topic:

***... O you who believe! Whoever of you turns back from his religion*:** As explained earlier, turning back from religion here means taking the Jews and the Christians for a friend. The verse, like the preceding one, is addressed to the believers. The main theme is to declare that the true religion does not need such people's belief, which is polluted with love of the enemies of God. God has counted such friendship as disbelief and polytheism, as He has said: *and whoever amongst you takes them for a friend, then surely he is one of them*. It is because God is the Guardian and Helper of His religion, and as an aspect of His help to His religion, He will certainly bring a people who will renounce the enemies of God, and love His friends and will not love any except Him.

***... then soon Allah will bring a people*:** God has ascribed the bringing to Himself to confirm the meaning of His help to His religion. The context makes it clear that this religion has got a Helper, besides Whom it does not need any helper—and that is God Himself. The speech puts the help to religion given by these people *vis-à-vis* the national help sought by those who love God's enemies. Likewise, the word, "people," and mention of their attributes and related verbs in plural show that the people whose appearance is promised, will be a community not one or two individuals. In other words, it does not say that God will bring in every period a person who will love God and whom God will love, and who will be lowly before believers and mighty before disbelievers, and who will fight in the way of God and will not be afraid of the censure of any censurer.

Bringing of these people is attributed to God. It does not mean that He will create them, because there is no creator except God. He has said: *Allah is the Creator of everything ...* (39:62). Rather this bringing connotes that it is He Who shall arouse them to take the opportunity to help the religion; and shall enhance their honor by loving them and being loved by them; He will help them in being lowly before His friends and mighty against His enemies, and in fighting in His way and ignoring every censurer's comments. Therefore, their help to the religion is God's help to it through them and by means of them. Whether this promise is implemented at once or

after sometime is all the same for God, although our mind because of its limitation differentiates between nearness and remoteness.

***He shall love them and they shall love Him*:** Love is unrestricted with any attribute or adjective; thus this mutual love is for 'person' only without any condition. They love God; it follows that they give preference to their Lord over anything else, be it wealth, honor, family, or other such things. They do not love anyone among the enemies of God; if they love any one, it is reserved for the friends of God because of the love of God.

As for His love to them, it means that they are free from every injustice, clean of every spiritual uncleanness, be it disbelief or sin. They attain this cleanness through divine protection, or through divine forgiveness resulting from repentance. It is because God does not love any injustice or sin as He says: ... *then surely Allah does not love the unbelievers* (3:32); ... *and Allah does not love the unjust* (3:57); ... *surely He does not love the extravagant* (6:141); ... *and Allah does not love the mischief-makers* (5:64); ... *Surely Allah does not love those who exceed the limits* (2:190); ... *surely He does not love the proud* (16:23); ... *surely Allah does not love the treacherous* (8:58); apart from other such verses.

These verses condemn all evils. When these evils are removed from man, as God's love to him testifies, he will acquire their opposite virtues. After all man cannot be devoid of both characteristics; he must compulsorily adhere to this side or that.

In short, they are the true believers whose belief is not tainted with injustice, and God has said: *Those who believe and do not mix up their faith with injustice, those are they who shall have the security and they are those who go aright* (6:82). So, they are protected from going astray; and God has said: ... *surely Allah does not guide him who leads astray,* ... (16:37). Thus, they are under divine protection against every straying and are led by divine guidance onto His straight path. They because of their faith—confirmed by God—are guided to following the Messenger and total submission to him, as they have surrendered totally to God. God says: *But no! By your Lord! They do not believe until they make you a judge of that which has become a matter of disagreement among them, and then do not find any straitness in their hearts as to what you have decided and submit with total submission* (4:65).

When they shall reach that stage, then the words of God shall be truly applicable to them: *Say: "If you love Allah, then follow me, Allah will love you*" (3:31) It also clearly proves that following the Prophet and

being loved by God are concomitants and inseparable; whoever follows the Prophet, God loves him; and God does not love anyone unless he is a follower of His Prophet.

When they shall follow the Messenger, they will acquire every good, which God loves and is pleased with, like piety, justice, magnanimity, patience, reliance on God, repentance, cleanness, and other such virtues. God says: *... then surely Allah love the pious* (3:76); *... surely Allah loves the doers of good* (2:195); *... and Allah loves the patient* (3:146); *surely Allah loves those who fight in His way in ranks as if they were a firm and compact wall* (61:4); *... surely Allah loves those who trust (in Him)* (3:159); *... surely Allah loves those who turn much (to Him), and He loves those who purify themselves* (2:222), apart from other such verses.

If you search and ponder on the verses which expound the effects of these qualities and their concomitant virtues, you will come upon a great many good characteristics; and you will find that all lead to the conclusion that the people having those virtues are the heirs who shall inherit the earth, and for them will be the good end of the abode, as the verse under discussion (*O you who believe! Whoever of you turns back ...*) points to it; and God has stated it in a short but comprehensive sentence: *... and the (good) end is for piety* (20:132).

We shall explain the underlying theme of this verse in another relevant place, God willing.

... lowly before the believers, mighty against the unbelievers: *al-Adhillah* and *al-Aizzah* are plurals of *al-dhalīl* (lowly) and *al-ʾazīz* (mighty) respectively. It is an allusion that they should be gentle to the believers in respect to God Who is their friend and they are His friend; and should not pay any attention to the false honor which the unbelievers manifest and to which the divine religion does not attach any importance. God has guided His Prophet to this reality when He has said: *Do not strain your eyes after what We have given certain classes of them to enjoy, and do not grieve for them, and make yourself gentle to the believers* (15:88). Probably, the preposition *ʿalā* (on, over) has been used for *adhillah* (lowly) because it contains the meaning of love and compassion or of bending down, as has been claimed.

... they shall strive hard in Allah's way and shall not fear the censure of any censurer: Fighting in the way of God has been especially singled out from among their numerous virtues because the context demanded it, as God has declared that He will raise them for helping His religion.

The phrase: "and shall not fear the censure of any censurer," is apparently a conditional clause related to all preceding sentences and not with the immediately preceding one (*they shall fight in Allah's way*), although it is the safest interpretation in such constructions. No doubt, fighting in the way of God is often faced by censurers' censure who warns the believers that if they went for *jihād*, they would be in danger of losing their wealth, lives, and would have to bear untold hardships and difficulties. But the same is the case of being lowly before the believers and mighty against the unbelievers. After all, the latter have, in their hands, worldly embellishments, desirable luxuries, and necessities of life, which the believers do not have. And if one turns away from those unbelievers, he invites censure of the censurers. Yet the true believers do not fear such things.

The verse contains a prophecy of undesirable unseen events that were to appear in future, and we shall discuss them, God willing, under "A Qur'anic and Traditional Discourse and Discussion."

Examining Narrations

(17) al-Suyūti writes under the verse: *O you who believe! Do not take the Jews and the Christians for friends*: Ibn Ishāq, Ibn Jarīr, Ibn al-Mundhir, Ibn Abī Hātim, Abu al-Shaykh, Ibn Marduwayh, al-Bayhaqī (in his al-Dalāil) and Ibn ʿAsākir have narrated from ʿUbādah b. al-Walīd that ʿUbādah b. al-Sāmit said, "When Banū Qaynuqā' fought the Messenger of God, ʿAbdullāh b. Ubayy b. Salūl held fast to them and stood by them, while ʿUbādah b. al-Sāmit went to the Messenger of God, and renounced their covenant before God and His Messenger, he was from Banū ʿAwf b. al-Khazraj, and he had got a covenant with them just as they had got a covenant with ʿAbdullāh b. Ubayy; so [ʿUbādah b. al-Sāmit] renounced them before the Messenger of God and said, 'I love God and His Messenger and the believers, and renounce before God and His Messenger the covenant of these unbelievers and their friendship.'" (*al-Durr al-manthūr*)

(18) The same book says that it was about ʿAbdullāh b. Ubayy that these verses were revealed: *O you who believe! Do not take the Jews ... then surely the party of Allah are they that shall be triumphant* (5:51 & 56).

(19) The same book says: Ibn Abī Shaybah and Ibn Jarīr have narrated from ʿAtiyyah b. Saʿd that he said, " ʿUbādah b. al-Sāmit (from

Banu al-Hārith b. al-Khazraj) came to the Messenger of God, and said, 'O Messenger of God! I have numerous friends among the Jews and I adhere to God and His Messenger getting clear of the friendship of the Jews, and I love God and His Messenger.' Then ʿAbdullāh b. Ubayy said, 'I am a man who fears lest a calamity should befall me, I shall not renounce the friendship of my guardians.' So the Messenger of God said to ʿAbdullāh b. Ubayy, 'O Abu al-Hubāb! Do you think that what you have spoken of the Jews' friendship is for you against ʿUbādah?' He said, 'Then I'll accept.' So God revealed [the following] verses: *O you who believe! Do not take the Jews and Christians for friends ... and Allah will protect you from the people; ...* [5:51–67]."

(20) Again the same book narrates: Ibn Marduwayh narrates from Ibn ʿAbbās that he said, "'ʿAbdullāh b. Ubayy b. Salūl accepted Islam; then he said, 'Surely there is a pact between me and Banū Qurayzah and Banu al-Nadīr, and I fear calamities;' so he turned back and became an unbeliever. And ʿUbādah b. al-Sāmit said, 'I renounce the pact of Qurayzah and al-Nadīr turning towards God, and I love God and His Messenger.' Then God revealed: *O you who believe! Do not take the Jews and the Christians for friends; So you will see those in whose hearts is a disease, hastening in them,* [that is, ʿAbdullāh b. Ubayy] ... *Only Allah is your Guardian and His Messenger and those who believe, those who keep up prayers and pay the zakāt while they bow* [that is, ʿUbādah b. al-Sāmit and the companions of the Messenger of God]. He [Ibn ʿAbbās] said [reciting the verse]: "*And had they believed in Allah and the Prophet and what was revealed to him, they would not have taken them for friends, but most of them are transgressors* [5:81]."

Author's comments: This story has been narrated through other chains too. However, we have repeatedly explained that such "reasons of revelation" are merely the personal opinions of exegetes who have applied the stories to the verses that seemed somehow relevant. There are other signs in them that point to this fact. How could these stories have caused revelation of these verses, when they mention the Christians with the Jews, and there was no trace of Christians in the events of Banū Qaynuqāʿ nor in the affairs of Banū Qurayzah or Banu al-Nadīr? The Muslims had no dealing with the Christians in all those happenings. And there is no reason justifying their uncalled for inclusion in divine speech. There are

many verses in the Qur'an describing the Jews' condition in the happenings that had taken place between them and the Muslims. Also where it deals with the hypocrites' meddling, it particularly mentions the Jews, and has not said anything about the Christians, as for example in the chapter of "The Mustering" and others. So how can we treat the mention of the Christians in these verses as uncalled for?

Moreover, the tradition says that not less then 17 verses (5:51–67) were revealed about ʿUbādah b. al-Sāmit and ʿAbdullāh b. Ubayy. However, first of all, these verses are not inter-connected, so that it may be claimed that they were revealed at one go.

Second: There is among them the verse [of *wilāyah*]: *Only Allah is your Guardian ...* [5:55], and there are *mutawātir* traditions narrated by the Shīʾahs and Sunnīs that it was revealed about ʿAlī.

Third: There is also the verse [of *balligh*]: *O Messenger! Deliver what has been revealed to you from your Lord ...* [5:67], and it has no connection with the narrated stories.

Apparently, the narrator looked at the story of ʿUbādah and ʿAbdullāh, and then found that some of the above verses have some relevance to it; so he applied the story to the verses. There can be no other explanation. However, the application was not done properly, as he put seventeen verses in place of three, just because they all speak about the People of the Book.

(21) al-Suyūtī narrates, through Ibn Jarīr and Ibn al-Mundhir, from ʿIkrimah that [he said], "The verse: *O you who believe! Do not take the Jews and the Christians for friends; they are friends of each other,* was revealed about Banū Qurayzah; when they committed treachery and broke the pact they had made with the Messenger of God, by writing to Abū Sufyān b. Harb, calling them and the Quraysh to enter into their fortresses. So the Prophet sent Abū Lubābah b. Abdu al-Mundhir to them in order that he might urge them to come down from their fortresses. When they agreed to come down, he pointed to his throat—meaning slaughter. At the same time, Talhah and al-Zubayr were corresponding with the Christians and the Syrians. And I have been told that some companions of the Prophet were afraid of being afflicted with poverty and indigence, so they corresponded with the Jews of Banū Qurayzah and Banu al-Nadīr, giving them news about the Prophet , [expecting] to seek from them loan and (other) benefits [afterwards]. So they were forbidden it." (*al-Durr al-manthūr*)

Author's comments: There is no difficulty in (accepting) this tradition. It explains the *wilāyah* in the verse as love and affinity, and the preceding discourse supports it. If that was really the reason of revelation, then the verses are unrestricted and will also apply to other similar situations; and if the tradition is merely an application, then the case is clear.

(22) *Majmaʾ al-bayān* writes under the verse: *O you who believe! Whoever of you turns back from his religion, then soon Allah will bring a people He shall love them and they shall love Him*. And it has been said, 'They are: the Leader of the faithful ʿAlī and his companions, when he fought those who fought against him—the *nākithīn* (pledge-breakers), the *qāsitīn* (deviators from the truth), the *māriqīn* (heretics).[1] It has been narrated from ʿAmmār, Hudhayfah and Ibn ʿAbbās; and it is also narrated from Abū Jaʾfar and Abū ʿAbdillāh.

Author's comments: [al-Tabrisī] has written in *Majmaʾ al-bayān* after quoting the above tradition, "This statement is supported by the fact that the Prophet had praised ʿAlī, with the very attributes mentioned in the verse. He said about him when he called him to conquer Khaybar (after dismissing previous standard-bearers one after the other when they came back accusing the people of cowardice while the people accused them of the same), 'Surely, tomorrow I will give the standard to a man who loves God and His Messenger, and God and His Messenger love him; repeatedly attacking, never fleeing; he will not return until God gives victory on his hand;' and then he gave the standard to him.

"As for the attributes of being gentle with the believers and hard against the unbelievers, and waging war in the way of God, without being afraid of a censure of any censurer, nobody can deny that ʿAlī, fully deserved these virtues. His *jihād* against polytheists and unbelievers is well known, and everyone is aware of his striving in strengthening of Islam and helping the religion, as well as his gentleness before the believers.

"It is also supported by the warning given by the Messenger of God, to the Quraysh that ʿAlī might fight them after him. Ithappened when Suhayl b. ʿAmr came to him with a group; they said:'O Muḥammad! Our slaves have come to you and you return them to us.' Thereupon, the Messenger of God, said, 'You should desist (from such behavior), O people of Quraysh! Otherwise, God will certainly raise over you a man who will beat you on

1 In the battles of Jamal, Siffīn and Nahrawān, respectively. (Trans.)

the interpretation of the Qur'an as I had beaten you on its revelation.' Some of his companions said, 'who it is, O Messenger of God? Abū Bakr?' He said, 'No; rather it is the repairer of shoes inside the room.' And ʿAlī was (then) repairing the shoes of the Messenger of God.

"It has been narrated from ʿAlī, that he said on the day of Basrah, 'By God! The people of this verse were not fought against till today;' then he recited this verse.

"And Abū Ishāq al-Thaʾlabī has narrated in his *al-Tafsīr* through his chain from al-Zuhrī from Saʾīd b. al-Musayyab from Abū Hurayrah that the Messenger of God, said, 'Will come to me on the Day of Resurrection a group of my companions, and they will be removed from the *hawd*; so I will say, "O my Lord! My companions, my companions"; and it will be said, "Surely you do not know what they did after you, surely they fell back (from religion)."'"

What al-Tabrisī has written fits on ʿAlī. There is no doubt that he is the best example of the attributes mentioned in the verse; but there is a question about its application on the whole group who were with him in the battles of the Camel and Siffīn, because many of them had changed after that, while the words in the verse: *He shall love them and they shall love Him*, have come without any exception, and you have known its meaning.

(23) Also al-Thaʾlabī says, "And it has been narrated that the Prophet, was asked about this verse, and he tapped his hand on Salmān's shoulder and said, 'He and his people.' Then he said, 'If the religion were fastened to the Milky Way, certainly some people from Persia would have got it.'"

Author's comments: The comment mentioned above applies here also, except if it is taken to mean that they would be raised from his people.

(24) al-Thaʾlabī goes on to record, "And it has been said that they are the people of Yemen. They are most gentle-hearted, mildest in temper; the faith is Yemenite, and the wisdom is Yemenite. ʿAyād b. Ghanam al-Ashʾarī said, 'When this verse was revealed, the Messenger of God pointed to Abū Musā al-Ashʾarī and said, "They are his people."'"

Author's comments: This theme has been narrated in *al-Durr al-manthūr*, through several chains; and the preceding comment applies here too.

(25) al-Tabarī narrates through his chain from Qatādah that he said, "God revealed this verse and He certainly knew that a group of

people would soon apostatize; when God took away His Prophet Muḥammad, most of the Arabs turned back from Islam except three mosques: people of Medina, people of Mecca and people of Bahrain. They (that is, the others) said, 'We shall pray but we shall not pay *zakāt*, and our wealth shall not be taken by force.' So Abū Bakr talked (with companions) about it, and it was said to him, 'Surely if they had its knowledge they would pay it and increased over it.' But he said, 'No, by God! I will not separate a thing which God has joined; and if they refused (to give) a cord which God and His Messenger have made compulsory, we should fight them for it.' Then God raised a group with Abū Bakr, and he fought on what the Prophet of God had fought on, until he captured, killed and burned into fire many people who had turned back from Islam and had refused *zakāt*; and he fought them until they agreed to pay *zakāt*, with humility and inferiority. "

Author's comments: al-Suyūtī has narrated it in *al-Durr al-manthūr* through ʿAbd b. Hamīd, Ibn Jarīr, Ibn al-Mundhir, Abu al-Shaykh, al-Bayhaqī and Ibn ʿAsākir from Qatādah; and also from al-Dahhāk and al-Hasan.

The wording of the narrative clearly testifies that it is merely an application based on personal opinion. Therefore, the objections against previous narratives would also apply in this case. These battles contain many happenings and affairs, and among the fighters were people like Khālid b. al-Walīd, Mughīrah b. Shuʾbah, Busr b. al-Artāh, and Sumrah b. Jundab. History records about them in these battles and in later days such injustice and sins which do not leave any chance to apply to them the verse: *He shall love them and they shall love Him.* You should study history books and then ponder on the verse's meaning, which we have given.

An exegete has indulged in such an exaggeration in this idea that he shows his astonishment on someone's saying: 'The verse is more clearly applicable to the Ashʾarites from Yemen than to those who had fought the apostates.' We append below a gist of his comments:

"The verse is general and covers all those who helped the religion from among those good Muslims who had got the virtues mentioned in it; right from the believers during the time of the Prophet, to those who came after him; and it fits on all the previously mentioned traditions, like the one saying that it is about Salmān and his people (in spite of its weakness), and the one that it concerns Abū Musā Ashʾarī and his people, and

the one that it is about Abū Bakr and his companions. However, it does not fit on the tradition which says that the verse is about ᶜAlī, because the verse contains the word, *people*, and it is not used for one person, as it is made for a group."

This is the gist of his opinion. It only shows that he has treated the divine speech with its praising phrases, just like poetry in which the praise of the subjects is entirely based on imagination. Whatever the poet can imagine, he applies it to his praised one, without caring whether it was true or false, but God says: *and who is truer of word than Allah?* (4:122) Or he has taken it as our usual talk, which is generally based on laxity and carelessness; and whenever somebody objects on any such expression, we offer the excuse of indulgence. But God says: *Most surely it is a decisive word, and it is not a jest* (86:13–14). You have understood from the preceding explanation that if the verse is taken in its proper meaning with all the attributes that it contains, it will be clear that its application has not appeared yet. Read that part again, think over it, and then decide for yourself.

Even more astonishing is his comment at the end [that it does not fit on ᶜAlī because the word *people* is not used for one person]: Whoever has mentioned ᶜAlī, has said, "ᶜAlī and his companions"; just as others have mentioned: Salmān and his people, Abū Musā and his people, and Abū Bakr and his companions. Likewise, the traditions about ᶜAlī—and some have been mentioned earlier—speak about ᶜAlī and his companions. No one has said that it was revealed for ᶜAlī alone, so that it could be said that the verse's wordings fit on a group, not on an individual.

Of course al-Thaʾlabī has written in his *al-Tafsīr* that it was revealed about ᶜAlī. Also it is narrated in *Nahj al-bayān* (of al-Shaybānī) from al-Bāqir and al-Ṣādiq that it was revealed about ᶜAlī. But looking at them in conjunction with other traditions, it becomes clear that these too mean ᶜAlī and his companions who stood with him to help the religion in the battles of the Camel, Siffīn and the Khawārij.

Apart from that, there are a lot of traditions narrated through Sunnī chains that the verse: *Only Allah is your Guardian and His Messenger and those who believe, those who keep up prayers*, was revealed for ᶜAlī although it uses plurals.

Moreover, there is another objection on the traditions of Qatādah, al-Dahhāk and al-Hasan: The verse: *O you who believe! Whoever of you turns back from his religion, then soon Allah will bring a people He shall love*

them and they shall love Him ..., very clearly shows that there shall be an exchange and that God does not need these people who are present now; no matter whether the verse is addressed to those who were present at the time of its revelation, or to the combined group of those present and those not yet born. The aim is to declare to a group of believers that if they all or some of them turned away from the religion, God shall soon bring in their place a people He shall love them and they shall love Him—and obviously neither He does love apostates nor they do love Him—and who shall have such and such good characteristics and they shall help His religion.

It is clear that the promised group shall be different from the people who were present at the time of revelation. But those who fought against the apostates so soon after the Prophet's death were present at the time of revelation and it is they who were addressed with the clause: *O you who believe!* Therefore, the promise: *soon Allah will bring a people He shall love them and they shall love Him*, cannot be applied to them.

The verse runs on the line of the verse: *... and if you turn back He will bring in your place another people, then they will not be like you* (47:38).

(26) al-Nuʾmānī narrates in his *al-Tafsīr*, through his chain from Sulaymān b. Harūn al-ʾIjillī that he said, "I heard Abū ʿAbdillāh, saying, 'Surely, the master of this matter has (companions) reserved for him; if all the people went away, God would bring his companions; and it is they about whom God, the Mighty, the Great, has said: *... therefore if these disbelieve in it, We have already entrusted with it a people who are not disbelievers in it* (6:89); and about them He has said: *then soon Allah will bring a people He shall love them and they shall love Him, lowly before the believers, mighty against the unbelievers.*

Author's comments: This connotation has been narrated by al-ʿAyyāshī and al-Qummī in their books of *tafsīr*.

A Qur'anic and Traditional Discourse and Discussion

We have repeatedly hinted previously that when Qur'an puts too much emphasis on a certain topic, and imperatively asserts and goes to the utmost limit in affirming it, it gives an indication that the causes and factors that were then present would surely join forces to push man to the pitfalls of perdition and make him liable to the wrath of God. Look, for example, at the verses of interest and of the love of the kindred, etc.

This inference springs from the nature of speech. When a wise speaker

gives a simple and easy to comply with order, and then goes to the extreme in emphasizing it; or when he addresses a respected personality in a way that such people are not talked to in that manner (for example, a divine scholar, deep rooted in self-denial and worship is openly admonished not to commit heinous debauchery), it shows that there is some hidden reason behind it, and that there lies ahead a great dangerous situation and an imminent perdition.

The Qur'anic talks of this style were certainly followed by such events and happenings that confirmed that allusion, or let us say, prophecy; although those who heard the verse on the day of revelation probably were not aware of the hints and allusions it contained.

Look at how the Qur'an ordered people to love the Prophet's kindred, and how it emphasized it until it was counted as the wage of messengership, and then see how the Muslims inflicted calamitous oppressions and massacres on his family members, to such an extent that if they were ordered to do such things they could not do more.

The Qur'an forbade discord and disagreement, and emphasized this prohibition to the utmost degree; and then the *ummah* was disunited and divided into so many sects that exceeded the disunity of the Jews and the Christians. The Jews had divided into seventy one sects and the Christians into seventy two, but the Muslim went to seventy three sects. This was only in matters of belief and theology; as for their divisions in social orders and political systems, etc., nobody can fully compute it.

The Qur'an forbids judging by what God has not revealed. It prohibited creating discord between various classes, and clearly told the *ummah* not to transgress the boundary or to follow their low desires, etc. In spite of all this emphasis there happened what we all are aware of.

This prohibition of taking the unbelievers and the People of the Book as friends did not fare any differently from other forcefully emphasized Qur'anic prohibitions. It may rather be said that no other prohibition in the circle of the branches of religion reaches near this forbiddance. Its importance was raised to such a level that God counted the friends of the People of the Book and the unbelievers as being one of them: *and whoever amongst you takes them for a friend, then surely he is one of them*; He declared that they are not from God: *... and whoever does this, he shall have nothing (to do) with Allah, ...* (3:28); He warned them most forcefully, and said time and again: *... and Allah cautions you of Himself; ...* (3:30); and we have explained under the verse that it indicates that what they had been

warned of, was bound to happen without any change.

If you want more clarification then think over the verses 111 and 113 of chapter 11 (Hūd): God has before that given the stories of the peoples of Noah, Hūd, Sālih and others and described the discord of the Jews in their books. Then He says: *And your Lord will most surely pay back to all their deeds in full; surely He is aware of what they do. Stand fast then (in the right path) as you are commanded, as also he who has turned (to Allah)*—Note that the address is to the community—*and be not inordinate (O men!), surely He sees what you do. Now, ponder on the next verse: And do not incline to those who are unjust, lest the Fire touch you, and you have no guardians besides Allah, then you shall not be helped.*

The verse is unrestricted and, therefore, the fire shall touch them in this world too before the next; and He has threatened them by the clause: *and Allah cautions you of Himself*; this touching of the Fire is explained in the verse: ... *This day have those who disbelieve despaired of your religion, so fear them not, and fear Me* ... (5:3). It makes it clear that what the believers were afraid of regarding their religion, until this verse was revealed, from the disbelievers, that is, the polytheists and the People of the Book, now they are safe from it; therefore, they should not fear them about their religion; rather they should fear their Lord. What were they afraid of regarding their religion from the disbelievers? It was because they were aware that the only goal that the disbelievers had before their eyes was to extinguish the light of religion, and to snatch away this precious commodity from their hands by any means available. They were under this apprehension before today; but revelation of the chapter of "The Table" brought a feeling of security to them, and their hearts became tranquil. Even so, they should fear their Lord, lest He takes away their light and deprives them of their religion.

It is known that God does not inflict any misfortune or punishment on any people unless they fully deserve it. He says: *This is because Allah never change a bounty which He has conferred upon a people until they change their own condition;* ... (8:53). Thus, He made it clear that His changing of bounty does not take place unless the people concerned deserve it, which is then followed by change of bounty. God has called religion or religious guardianship a favor or bounty, as He says soon after it: *This day have I perfected for you your religion and completed My favor on you and chosen for you Islam as religion.*

If this favor is changed it is through their own agency. It is expected

that they would go out of divine protection by cutting relation from Him, inclining towards the unjust people and taking the disbelievers and the People of the Book for friends. It is incumbent on them to fear God concerning their selves,—fearing His wrath which nobody can avert; He has threatened them of it in these words: *and whoever amongst you takes them for a friend, then surely he is one of them; surely Allah does not guide the unjust people* (5:51). God in these words has declared that He will not guide them to their felicity; and it is this felicity with which guidance is connected. Their felicity in the world means that they would live on religious tradition and general Islamic custom in their society.

When the structure of this system comes down, its manifest bearings are disrupted, like enjoining the good and forbidding the evil, which had preserved its real meaning; general Islamic practices give way to disbelievers' traditions; this un-Islamic behavior gradually takes firm roots and is permanently established—and this is the situation of Muslims' society in these days.

Ponder on general Islamic behavior arranged by the Book and the *Sunnah*, which they try to establish among the Muslims. Then look at this corrupt behavior burdened over the Muslims' shoulders today. Lastly think over the divine words: *then soon Allah will bring a people He shall love them and they shall love Him, lowly before the believers, mighty against the unbelievers, they shall fight in Allah's way and shall not fear the censure of any censurer* (5:54). Then you will realize that all the evils which have today encompassed our Muslim society, and have taken deep roots—that we had borrowed from the unbelievers and then it has grown and generated—are the opposites of what God has mentioned as the attributes of the people whose appearance He has promised. In other words, all our bad characteristics are encapsuled in the fact that our people today do not love God, nor does He love them, they are lowly before the unbelievers, haughty against the believers; they do not fight in God's way and fear the censure of every censurer.

It was this degeneration that the Qur'an had read in those people's faces. You may say that it was a news of the unseen which the knowing God had given the Prophet: That the Islamic society will turn back from the religion; it would not be the terminological apostasy; rather it would be a degradation for which God says: *and whoever amongst you takes them for a friend, then surely he is one of them; surely Allah does not guide the unjust people* (5:51); *And had they believed in Allah and the Prophet and*

what was revealed to him, they would not have taken them for friends, but most of them are transgressors (5:81).

God had promised to help them if they would help Him, and to weaken their enemies if the Muslim themselves did not strengthen and help them. He says: *... If you help Allah, He will help you* (47:7); *... and if the People of the Book had believed, it would have been better for them; of them (some) are believers and most of them are transgressors. They shall by no means harm you but with a slight distress; and if they fight you they shall turn (their) backs to you, then they shall not be helped. Abasement is brought down upon them wherever they are found, except under a protection from Allah and a protection from men, ...* (3:110–12). It is not far fetched to infer from the words: *except under a protection from Allah and a protection from men*, that they could come out of that abasement if they established friendship with people or if God gave them mastery over people.

Then God promised the Muslim society—and we have seen its condition—that He shall *bring a people that He shall love them and they shall love Him, lowly before the believers, mighty against the unbelievers, they shall fight in Allah's way and shall not fear the censure of any censurer.*

These attributes, which God has ascribed to them, are the very characteristics that the today's Islamic society does not have. If you ponder on them, you may infer the detail of the evils, which the verse alludes, shall soon afflict the Islamic society.

Those evils are enumerated in a lot of traditions giving the news of the upheavals of the last days; they are narrated from the Prophet and the Imams of *Ahl al-Bayt*. Despite their great numbers, on the whole they are not free from the defects of interpolation and alteration; yet among them are traditions whose authenticity is confirmed by subsequent events and happenings. Those traditions are recorded in the books compiled by ancient scholars a thousand years or more before our time. Their authorship is established and people have been quoting from them during all that period.

Moreover, those traditions spoke about such events and happenings that had not taken place at that time, nor had the people in those days ever expected such things to happen. Therefore, we have no option but to admit their authenticity and accept that they have come from the fountainhead of revelation.

For example, al-Qummī has narrated in his *al-Tafsīr*, from his father, from Sulaymān b. Muslim al-Khashshāb, from ʿAbdullāh b. Jarīh al-Makkī,

from ʿAtāʾ b. Abī Riyāh, from ʿAbdullāh b. ʿAbbās that he said: "We performed *hajj*—the Last Pilgrimage—with the Messenger of God, and then he took hold of the door of Kaʾbah, thereupon he (stood) facing us said, 'May I inform you of the Signs of the Day of Resurrection?' Salmān al-Fārisī, who was the nearest of all there, replied, 'Surely, O Messenger of God!'

"The Holy Prophet, said, 'Verily, amongst the Sings of the Hour is that people will neglect the prayer (that is, will not pray at all, or will pray without fulfilling its conditions, or will not pray in the preferred time), and will follow their own desires (that is, desires will supersede the commands of God, they will follow only those rules which will appeal to them, and will leave other rules), and will incline towards their own preferences, and will respect the wealthy people (forgetting the Islamic criterion of honor, that is, piety), and will sell the religion for worldly benefits (for example, the greed of worldly riches will instigate them to go to such places where, they very well know, it would be difficult to observe religious commands); at that time the heart and soul of the believer will melt (from grief) as salt melts in water, because he will see the unlawful things (and actions) and will not be able to change them.'

"Salmān said, 'And is this to happen, O Messenger of God?'" The Holy Prophet, said, 'Yes, By (God) in Whose hand is my soul, O Salmān! At that time their rulers will be tyrant, the ministers transgressors, the leaders unjust and the trustees embezzlers.'" Salmān said: 'And is this to happen, O Messenger of God?'" The Holy Prophet, said, 'Yes, By (God) in Whose hand is my soul, O Salmān! Verily at that time evil will become virtue, and virtue will become evil; embezzlers will be trusted, and trustworthy people will be thought untrustworthy; and the liars will be authenticated, and the truthful one will be considered a liar.'

"Salmān said, 'And is this to happen, O Messenger of God?'" The Holy Prophet, said, 'Yes, By (God) in Whose hand is my soul, O Salmān! At that time, women will be rulers and concubines will be consulted; (it may mean the governments of the women and/or the domination of women over their husbands—so much so that the husbands will not, or cannot, ask them to remain within the limits of the shariah, leaving them free to go wherever they want in whatever clothes they like) and the children will sit upon *minbars* (pulpits). (It may mean that children will sit upon pulpit of the Prophet even though they cannot appreciate the sanctity of the *minbar*. Or it may mean that such people will ascend the pulpit who

will not deserve such honor. The *minbar* was created for delivering the commands of God to His servants. Its only purpose was to enjoin good and to forbid evil, and later on the narration of the tragedy of Karbalā' was included in it, because the *fadīlah* [superiority] and sufferings of the *Ahl al-Bayt* are important parts of religion. If someone wants to exhort others to do good, he must sincerely follow the shariah himself; and if he wants to forbid others from doing evil, he, first of all, must abstain from the sins himself. Unfortunately, nowadays anyone who can recite a few poems of Iqbāl or Rumī, and who is unrestrained enough to invent *fadāil* and *masāib* of the *Ahl al-Bayt* on the spur of the moment, is given the titles *al-ʾallāmah*,*mawlānā* and *dhākir* and is offered heavy fee to demonstrate his oratorical power, even if he shaves his beard, even if he knows nothing about Qur'an and *Hadīth*, even if he expresses his own opinions against the sayings of the Holy Prophet and the Imams [peace be on them all], even if he uses the pulpit to mislead the masses); and the lie will be considered as cleverness; and *zakat* will be (disliked) as fines; and the booty of war will be like personal property (or in present days' context, public property will be squandered as personal property); and man will be tyrant to his parents and generous to his friend; and at that time comets will appear.'

"Salmān said, 'And is this to happen, O Messenger of God?'" The Holy Prophet, said, 'Yes, By (God) in Whose hand is my soul, O Salmān! At that time woman will become a partner of her husband in trade; (it means, more probably, that she will help her husband in the shop, acting as sales-girl, accountant and what not); and the rain will be very hot; (its meaning is not clear yet. Does it mean radioactive rain?), and virtuous people will remain very sorrowful; and the poor person will be humiliated; at that time, the markets will come nearer; (it has already happened, thanks to the fantastic developments in the means of communications, like teleprinters, fax and internet. A man sitting in New York buys and sells in Tokyo). Then this will say. "I did not sell anything" and that will say, "I did not get any profit." Thus, you will see none who is not complaining against God.'

"Salmān said, 'And is this to happen, O Messenger of God?'" The Holy Prophet, said, 'Yes; By (God) in Whose hand is my soul, O Salmān! And then it will happen that their rulers will be such people that if they talked, they would kill them and if they remained silent, they would confiscate their wealth, would put their honor under their feet and would shed their blood—and the people's hearts will fill with fear; then you will not find

anyone but that he would be afraid, fearful, awed and in terror.'

"Salmān said, 'And is this to happen, O Messenger of God?'" The Holy Prophet, said, 'Yes, By (God) in Whose hand is my soul, O Salmān! Verily at that time some things will be brought from the East, and some things from the West, and my *ummah* (Muslims) will be dyed in them. [It means that un-Islamic behavior and character will be imported from the East and the West and Muslims will imitate those things and will be dyed in un-Islamic color.] Then woe be unto the weaker people of my *ummah* from them; and woe be unto those (un-Islamic agents) from God. They will not have mercy upon the little ones and will not respect the old ones; and will not pardon anyone who committed a mistake. Their bodies will be of human beings, and their hearts will be of Satans.'" Salmān said, 'And is this to happen, O Messenger of God?'" The Holy Prophet, said, 'Yes, By (God) in Whose hand is my soul, O Salmān! And at that time males will satisfy their lust with males; and females will satisfy their lust with females; and minor boys will be mounted upon like the women; and the males will liken themselves to females [that is, will look like females]; and females will look like males. [The clean-shaved faces and long hair on one side, and pants and bell-bottoms on the other are proof of the fulfilment of this forecast], and females will ride the saddles (that is, horses, cycles, scooters and motorcycles). So there will be curse of God upon those women of my *ummah*.'

"Salmān said, 'And is this to happen, O Messenger of God?'" The Holy Prophet, said, 'Yes, By (God) in Whose hand is my soul, O Salmān! Verily, at that time mosques will be decorated (by gold, etc.) as are synagogues and cathedrals; and the (copies of the) Qur'an will be beautified (with designs and golden colors, etc.); and the minarets (of the mosques) will be high, and the lines of the people standing in prayers will increase but their hearts will be hating each other and their talks will be different from each other, [that is, though the external show of religion will be on the increase, the spirit of religion will disappear. Even when they will pray together, the Islamic brotherhood and unity will be absent. They will hate each other; they will not speak with one voice.]'

"Salmān said, 'And is this to happen, O Messenger of God?'" The Holy Prophet, said, 'Yes, By (God) in Whose hand is my soul, O Salmān! At that time males will use golden ornaments. [In many marriages, bride-groom wears golden ring. I wonder why it is thought necessary to start the married life by defying the command of God. Will such wilful affront

to religion bring the blessings of God and the Fourteen infallible, upon the newlyweds?]; and they (the males) will wear silk and (people) will use cheetah-skins.'

"Salmān said, 'And is this to happen, O Messenger of God?'" The Holy Prophet, said, 'Yes, By (God) in Whose hand is my soul, O Salmān! And at that time "interest" will appear (everywhere), and people will deal with (the help of) backbiting and bribe; and the Religion will be suppressed, and the world (worldly affairs) will be raised (in importance).'

"Salmān said, 'And is this to happen, O Messenger of God?'" The Holy Prophet, said, 'Yes, By (God) in Whose hand is my soul, O Salmān! At that time, divorce will increase. And the *hudūd* (punishments of various crimes and sins prescribed in Islam) of God will not be established [that is, the penal code given by God will not be followed, as is the case nowadays]. But it will not do any harm to God. [It will harm them only; they will suffer.]'

"Salmān said, 'And is this to happen, O Messenger of God?'" The Holy Prophet, said, 'Yes, By (God) in Whose hand is my soul, O Salmān! And at that time will appear female singers and musical instruments ["will appear" means "will be openly used"]; and will rule upon them most evil of my *ummah* (worst people will rule upon the Muslims).'

"Salmān said, 'And is this to happen, O Messenger of God?'" The Holy Prophet, said, 'Yes, By (God) in Whose hand is my soul, O Salmān! And at that time the rich of my *ummah* will go to pilgrimage for recreation, and the middle class for trade [What about foreign exchange, gold, watches and radios?], and the poor to show off. Thus, at that time, there will be people who will learn the Qur'an for other than God [that is, for earning worldly benefits] and will treat the Qur'an as musical instrument [as is happening today in Islamic countries where the Qur'an is recited on the radios, not to make people follow the religious commands, but just to entertain the listeners].'

"'And there will be people who will study religion for other than God [that is, for earning prestige or wealth, as is happening today when the main purpose of religious studies in many circles is to become a good orator, so that higher and higher fees may be demanded from the audience] and the number of illegitimate children will increase; and people will sing the Qur'an, and will fall upon one another in greed of the worldly (riches).'

"Salmān said, 'And is this to happen, O Messenger of God?'" The Holy Prophet, said, 'Yes, By (God) in Whose hand is my soul, O Salmān! This will happen when honors will be defiled, and sins will be committed, and

the evil people will have authority upon good people, and falsehood will be prevalent, and disputes will appear [talks will be full of obstinacy], and poverty will be wide-spread and people will be proud of their clothes [fine clothes will be the criterion of greatness], and there will be rains at wrong times; and they will like chess and gambling apparatus and musical instruments; and will dislike enjoining the good and forbidding the evil; so much so that the (true) believer will, at that time have less respect than a slave-girl; and the reciters (of the Qur'an) and those who spend their time in worshipping God will blame each other.

[Mudslinging amongst apparently religious people is not an uncommon sight nowadays.] Those are the people who will be called unclean and filthy in the kingdom of heavens.'

"Salmān said, 'And is this to happen, O Messenger of God?'" The Holy Prophet, said, 'Yes, By (God) in Whose hand is my soul, O Salmān! At that time the rich will not fear (anything) except the poor so much so that a beggar will continue begging between two Fridays and will not find anyone putting anything in his hands.'

"Salmān said, 'And is this to happen, O Messenger of God?'" The Holy Prophet, said, 'Yes, By (God) in Whose hand is my soul, O Salmān! At that time will talk Ruwaybidah.'" Salman asked, 'And what is Ruwaybidah? O Messenger of God, may my father and mother be made your ransom!'

"The Holy Prophet, said, 'Such persons will talk about public affairs who had not talked in such matter before. Then in a short time chaos will appear upon earth, and every nation will think that chaos was only in their land [but it will cover the whole world].

"'They will remain in that condition so long as God would wish them to remain; then the earth will throw out the pieces of its heart—gold, silver and other minerals'—(Then the Holy Prophet pointed towards the pillars, and said) 'like these (in size), but on that day neither gold nor silver will be of any benefit to anyone. And this is the meaning of the words of God: *So surely did come its* (that is, *qiyāmah's*) *Signs* [47:18].'" (*Bihār al-anwār*, vol.3).

(27) [al-Kulaynī] narrates in *al-Rawdat al-Kāfī*, from Muḥammad b. Yahyā, from Ahmad b. Muḥammad, from some of his companions. Also ʿAlī b. Ibraḥīm narrates from his father, from Ibn Abī ʿUmayr; both from Muḥammad b. Abī Hamzah, from Humrān that he said: "Abū ʿAbdillāh, said—when it was mentioned before him about those (in power), and the bad condition of the Shīʾahs near them—'I (once) went with Abū Jaʾfar al-Mansūr, and he was in

his procession. He was on a horse, and before him and behind him were many horses [that is, riders]; and I was at his side on a donkey. So he said to me, "O Abū ʿAbdillāh! It were proper if you had been glad at the power God had given us and the honor He had opened to us; and you should not tell people that you and your family have more right for this affair [that is, caliphate] than we have—thus inciting us against yourself and them.""'He (the Imam), said, 'So I told him, "Whoever has brought it to you from me is a liar." He said to me, "Do you swear [by God] for what you have said?" ' He (the Imam) said, 'I said, "Surely the people are enchanters, that is, they desire to turn your heart against me, therefore you should not listen to them, because we have more need of you than you have of us." Then he (al-Mansūr) said, "Do you remember the day I asked you, 'Is there any kingdom (decreed) for us?' And you said, 'Yes. Long, wide, strong; you will continue in respite in your affair and spaciousness in your world, until you afflict us with a sacred blood in a sacred month in a sacred town?'" ' He [the Imam) said, 'So I knew that he has memorized the *hadīth*, and I said, "May be God will suffice you, because I had not said it particularly for you, it was only a *hadīth* which I had narrated, then may be some other person from your family would do it." So he became silent.

"'When I returned to my residence, one of our followers came to me and said, "May I be made your ransom! By God! I saw you in the procession of Abū Jaʾfar; you rode a donkey and he was on a horse, and he talked to you looking down on you as you were under him. So I thought in my mind: 'He is the God's proof on the creation, and the master of this authority who is followed, while this other one commits oppression, murders the children of the prophets and indulges in bloodshed in the earth which God does not love; and yet he is in his procession and you are on a donkey.' This created such a doubt in my heart that I was afraid about my religion and my life."

"The Imam, said, 'I said to him, "Had you seen the angels who were around me, before and behind me, and on my right and left, you would have looked at him and his splendor with disdain." Then (the follower) said, "Now I am satisfied."

"'Then he asked, "Up to how long will they continue to rule?

When will release from them come?" I said, "Don't you know that there is a (fixed) term for everything?" He said, "Yes." Then I said, "Will it benefit you to know that when this thing came it would be quicker than the twinkling of an eye? If you were to know what and how was their condition before God, the Mighty the Great, you would most forcefully hate them; and if you and all the inhabitants of the earth were to strive to make them enter into the most serious sin they do, they would not be able to do so. So the Satan should not unsettle you, because *honor is only for Allah, and His Messenger, and the believers, but the hypocrites do not know*. Don't you know that whoever waits for our affair (power), and remains patient on what he experiences of harm and fear, he will be tomorrow in our group?""""

So when you see:

- that truth has died and truthful people have gone;that oppression has encompassed towns;
- that the Qur'an has become old and such things have been innovated in it, which were not therein, and it is interpreted according to desires;
- that religion has retreated as water goes back in its hole;
- that people of falsity tower over people of truth;
- that evil is manifested, and not forbidden; and evil men are absolved from guilt;
- that sin is wide-spread;
- that men content themselves with men, and women with women;
- that the believer is silent, his words are not accepted;
- that the sinner speaks untruth and his falsity and lie is not rebutted;
- that the younger looks at the elder with disdain;
- that relationships are cut off;
- that the one who is praised for sin, laughs at it and does not refute it;
- that a boy offers what a woman offers;
- that women marry women;
- that praise has increased;
- that man spends wealth in other than God's obedience and he is not forbidden nor his hand caught;
- that an onlooker seeks protection of God from the endeavours

of a believer;
- that neighbor troubles his neighbor and nobody stops him;
- that the unbeliever is glad with the condition he sees the believer in, happy on the mischief he sees in the earth;
- that intoxicants are drunk openly and gather on it those who do not fear God, the Mighty the Great;
- that enjoiner of good is humiliated;
- that sinner (committing) what God does not like, is powerful, praised;
- that people of Qur'an and *hadīth* are disdained, and so is the one who loves them;
- that the path of good is closed; and the path of evil well-trodden;
- that the House of God is abandoned and order is given to leave it;
- that man says what he does not do;
- that man are desirous of men and women of women;
- that a man lives on the earning of his posterior, and a woman on - that of her vulva;
- that women hold gatherings [of amusements] like men;
- that femininity has appeared in the Children of ʿAbbās, they use hair-dye and comb (their hair) as a woman combs [that is, makes herself up] for her husband;
- that men are given wealth for their genitals, people vie with each other for a man, and jealousy is shown about men;
- that a wealthy person is more honored than a believer;
- that interest is openly [taken and given], without any shame;
- that women get praised for fornication;
- that woman cajoles her husband to establish sexual relations with men;
- that most of the people—and the best household—are those who help (their) women in their sins;
- that the believer is sorrowful, humiliated and disdained;
- that innovations and fornication are wide-spread;
- that people give credence to false witnesses;
- that unlawful is made lawful, and lawful is made unlawful;
- that religion is [explained] by opinion, and the Book and its laws are suspended;
- that people do not wait for night [to commit their debaucheries]

because of their boldness against God;
- that a believer has no power to negate (an evil) except in his heart;
- that a great many wealth is used in [things that bring] the wrath of God, the Sublime, the Mighty;
- that the rulers bring the disbelievers nearer to themselves and keep the good people at distance;
- that the (rulers and) judges take bribe for judgement;
- that rulership is given to whoever increases his bid;
- that women of prohibited degrees are married, and are thought sufficient;
- that man is killed on suspicion and on insinuation;
- that man shows jealousy for man and spends his soul and wealth on him;
- that man is put to shame for his going to the women;
- that man eats from his wife's earning through debauchery—he knows it and stands for it;
- that a woman subdues her husband, and does what he does not want, and spends on her husband;
- that a man leases his wife or maid on hire, and is pleased with food and drink of inferior quality;
- that too much of false oaths are sworn in the name of God, the Sublime, the Mighty;
- that gambling is widespread, and intoxicant is openly sold, without any hindrance;
- that women offer themselves to the unbelievers;
- that (instruments of) amusements have spread, people pass by them but no one stops anyone, nor anyone dares to stop them;
- that a noble person is humiliated by someone whose power people are afraid of;
- that nearest person to the rulers is the one who is praised for abusing us, the *Ahl al-Bayt*;
- that the one who loves us is accused of lying and his evidence is rejected;
- that people compete with one another in falsehood;
- that listening to the Qur'an has become a burden for the people; while listening to falsehood is (considered) refreshing;
- that a neighbor shows respect to his neighbor for fear of his

tongue;
- that the divinely prescribed punishments are suspended; and deeds are (done) according to desires;
- that mosques are embellished;
- that the most truthful man in the eyes of the people is the onewho is a liar, calumniator;
- that evil has gained ground as well as hastening with slander;
- that wrong has spread;
- that backbiting is enjoyed and people greet each other with it;
- that *hajj* and *jihād* are sought for other than God;
- that the *sultān* humiliates a believer to please a disbeliever;
- that ruin is changed to structure;
- that man earns his livelihood by giving short measure and weight;
- that bloodshed is considered unimportant;
- that man seeks leadership for the sake of the world; and makes himself notorious for evil tongue in order that he is feared and entrusted with the affairs;
- that prayer is disdained;
- that man has a lot of wealth, which he has not paid *zakāt* of since he became its owner;
- that dead body is exhumed from its grave, is troubled and its shroud is sold;
- that disturbance has increased;
- that a man remains intoxicated in evenings and mornings, without caring for the people's condition;
- that cattle are abused sexually;
- that cattle gore one another;
- that man goes to his place of prayer and returns without any of his clothes on him;
- that people's hearts have become hard and their eyes are dry, and remembrance (of God) weights heavily on them;
- that unlawful earning is spread and vied for;
- that one prays to show the people;
- that a *faqīh* learns jurisprudence for other than religion, seeking the world and leadership;
- that people attach themselves to whoever gains ascendancy;
- that one who seeks his livelihood through lawful means is

criticized and put to shame; and one who seeks it through unlawful means is praised and respected;
- that in Mecca and Medina things are done which God does not like [but] no one stops them nor anyone puts obstacles between those evils and their doers;
- that instruments of amusements are openly used in Mecca and Medina;
- that if a man speaks some truth, enjoins good, and forbids evil, someone stands up to admonish him and says: 'It is no concern of yours';
- that people look at each other and follow the people of evil;
- that the path of good and its way is empty, nobody uses it;
- that a dead body is shaken and nobody feels pity for it;
- that every year innovation and evil takes place more than it was before;
- that people and gatherings do not follow except rich ones;
- that a needy person is paid for being laughed at, and is shown mercy for other than God's sake;
- that nobody is afraid of the heavenly signs;
- that people cohabit together like cattle; nobody forbids a bad thing for fear of people;
- that man spends a lot in other than God's obedience, and refuses a small amount in God's obedience;
- that disobedience of parents is wide-spread and parents are disdained; they (live) with the child in the most wretched condition, and he is glad if they are slandered;
- that women have taken possession of the kingdom and gained ascendancy over everything, nothing is done except what they desire;
- that a son slanders his father and invokes God against his parents and becomes happy on their death;
- that if a day passes for a man in which he did not commit a great sin—debauchery, giving short weight or measure, fornication, or drinking intoxicants—he would remain depressed and melancholy, thinking that, that day of his life was a loss;
- that the sultān hoards food stuff [with intention of increasing the price];
- that the money [God has given to the Prophet's] kindred is

distributed in wrong ways, and used in gambling and drinking intoxicants;
- that intoxicants are used for medicine, and are prescribed to patients and cure is sought in them;
- that all people are equally guilty of abandoning enjoining of good and forbiddance of evil; they do not consider it a part of religion;
- that hypocrites live in clover and the people of truth are in oblivion;
- that *ādhān* is given on wages, and prayer is led on wages;
- that the mosque is full of people who do not fear God, and have gathered there for backbiting and eating the flesh of the people of truth, and describe to one another [various kinds of] intoxicants;
- that an intoxicated person leads the people in prayer without understanding anything;
- that intoxication is not disgraced, and when a man is drunk, he is accorded respect and is feared, he is left without punishment and excuse is found for his intoxication;
- that the one who eats orphans' property is praised for his goodness;
- that the judges judge contrary to what God has ordered;
- that the rulers have trust in embezzlers for greed;
- that the rulers have allotted the inheritance to sinners who are audacious against God; they take [something] from them and leave them to do whatever they like;
- that the pulpits are used to enjoin piety, but the speaker himself does not do what he enjoins;
- that prayer's times are given no importance;
- that *sadaqah* is (given) on recommendation, not for the sake of God, and is paid in pursuit of people;
- that people's only concern is their stomachs and their genitals, they do not care what they eat and with whom they cohabit;
- that the world is advancing towards them;
- that the standards of truth have become faded;

Then be on guard, and seek deliverance from God, the Sublime, the Mighty; and be sure that the people are under the wrath of God, the Sublime, the Mighty, and He is giving them respite only for something intended for them; so remain anticipating

and strive hard that God should see you in a condition contrary to theirs. Then if chastisement is sent down to them and you are among them, you will hasten to the mercy of God; and if you are delayed, they shall be put on trial and you shall be out and away from the insolence against God, the Mighty, the Great, in which they are entangled. *And know that surely Allah does not waste the reward of the doers of good*, and *surely Allah's mercy is near to the doers of good* [9:120 & 7:56].""""

Author's comments: There are numerous traditions narrated from the Prophet and the Imams of *Ahl al-Bayt* of these connotations. The two *ahādīth* we have quoted above are most comprehensive of all. Those traditions expounding the condition of the last days give a sort of detail of what is contained in the noble verse: *O you who believe! Whoever of you turns back from his religion, then soon Allah will bring a people He shall love them and they shall love Him, lowly before the believers, mighty against the unbelievers, they shall fight in Allah's way and shall not fear the censure of any censurer ...* (5:54).

And God Knows better.

(Chapter 5 continues in Eng. Vol. 11)

The end. All praise be to Almighty God.

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